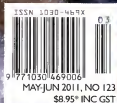
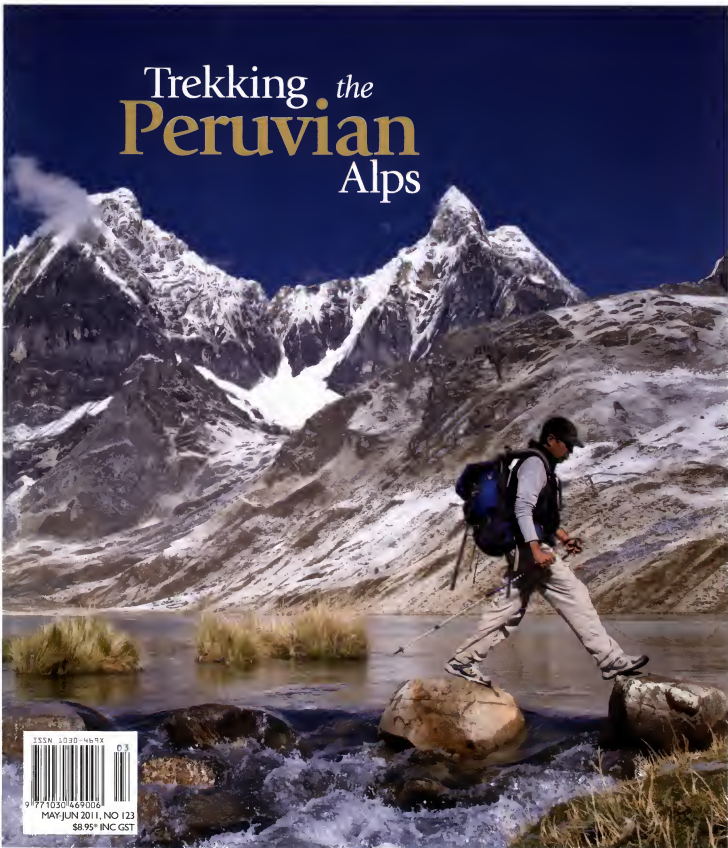


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Wild

Australian Wilderness Magazine

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WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



Cover *Javier Bello* crosses an outlet stream of Lake Carhuacocha bordering the Cordillera Huayhuash, Peru. *Mark Watson*

Afternoon cloud briefly parts to reveal the Southwest Face of Yerupaja (6617 metres), Cordillera Huayhuash, Peru. Watson

'I like tracks that leave some obstacles – for me they not only add to the charm of a track, but they are also little footnotes that I use to orient me in the landscape.'



Tracks

Lately I have been spending a lot of time pounding my way along tracks.

Between walking, climbing and training for Tassie's Cradle Run I have probably covered hundreds of kilometres in the last five months. All those kilometres and the space for my mind to wander covering them, has left me plenty of time for thinking about tracks and their relation to walking, and also about their current state, particularly in the Grampians – my favourite haunt.

Track-making seems to be me to be part art, part craft. Choosing the path of a track is not just about getting from a to b the shortest way, it's about taking the geography of the area into account, avoiding barriers and choosing natural corridors – this requires an intimate knowledge of an area. Some people are better at this than others; just like some people have a feel for moving through the bush where others blunder. Then there are the seemingly unimportant and simple decisions of track building, deciding whether or not to saw through a fallen tree or overhanging branch, whether to shift a rock. I like tracks that leave some obstacles – for me they not only add to the charm of a track, but they are also little footnotes that I use to orient me in the landscape.

Last November I was climbing in Kentucky, USA, and on my rest days I would run on the maze of nearby tracks that wound themselves around an amazing sandstone bridge called the Natural Arch. There was one track that followed a long ridgeline through forest, where each part of the track seemed almost indistinguishable from the other to my alien eye because autumn had left the ground covered in leaves. But I remembered small things: fallen logs, rock steps, little knolls or old gnarled trees, each a little signpost in the map in my head.

After all my mulling over tracks, I came to the conclusion that the best are those that don't impose themselves on the bush. This seems to be the opposite of how track-building is done at present in the Grampians, where 'making things safe' and its accompanying fear of liability ensures that

every new track is totally over-engineered.

A good example of this is a path that I run all the time near my parents' place in the Grampians, a modest but charming track (much like myself really) that winds its way from Zumsteins up to MacKenzie Falls. In 2006 big fires burnt through the area. The track itself was mostly unaffected (I could still run it), except for a set of wooden stairs that climbed up a steep section of the track – they were burnt down. In the aftermath of the fire Parks decided that the track needed upgrading, so they closed it and (eventually) began to work on replacing the set of steps – and many other parts of the track – with metals stairs and mesh walkways. What had been a relatively simple footpath was being engineered into submission. This process took a mere five years and while the track was partially open, it was still half closed at the beginning of this year. Why did it take so long? From what I understand it was because engineers decided that a section of rock that they were putting steel into just below the falls themselves was not solid enough, so instead, they were planning to build a bridge across to the other side of the creek, add a new track on the other side, then another bridge back to the original side – as ridiculous as this might seem and despite walkers having negotiated this section of track for years. Apparently they were just waiting for the cash to finish this section when rain of biblical proportions hit the Grampians in January and caused massive damage to the park.

A week after that rain I was up at my parents' place and decided to run the track because I was curious. Zumsteins was unrecognisable, like it had been hit by a bomb: all the wooden bridges that cross the river just above Zumsteins looked as though they had been swept aside by giants, while the road was buried under a foot of sand. The bridge below MacKenzie Falls had been meted out the same treatment as those downstream. The steel work on the track was safely in place, but one section of hillside had been washed away. Given the damage to the

area and assuming that the pace of rebuilding will resemble past efforts (pyramids were probably built quicker), it is not unreasonable to expect that this track may not be reopened for another ten years.

When I say this, I don't say it to have a crack at Parks. I know they don't have the money or resources to cope with all the normal demands of running our national parks, let alone coping with the aftermath of natural disasters. Even without major events like fires and floods the demands of track maintenance are enormous. I have noticed that in recent years – as a result of the prolonged drought I am guessing – any windy weather seems to bring down a disproportionate number of trees and branches compared to my memory of the past. Adding 140 millimetres of rain overnight to the mix was never going to help.

What I object to is the need to have tracks so over-engineered. What is wrong with having simple tracks where people can scramble over natural barriers? Why do tracks have to be so over the top and expensive? If people want a highway then they should stick to highways. We go bush to get away from structures, not to spend even more time with them. I would be curious to know who sets this agenda of over-engineering: is it Parks or insurance companies?

At the heart of it, I think fear of liability is the main problem: anytime you let anyone involved with liability near something adventurous – whether they are politicians, bureaucrats, lawyers or insurers – you can be certain it is the death of adventure. For the most part people need to be left to make their own decisions about what is safe and what isn't. If decisions about tracks are being made on the basis of liability then Parks will always pick the most conservative and expensive way of doing things – all of which impinges upon our ability to go out into the bush and make our own decisions, decisions that lie at the very core of what it means to be a bushwalker.

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Wild

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Issue 122, Mar-Apr 2011

WILD'S 30-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

My name is Wilma Van Dijk and I am one reader who has a complete set of Wild magazines. But it took a bit of effort to find the two I was missing.

I first saw Wild no 1 displayed in an outdoor shop where I often window-shopped but never bought anything I treated myself to buying Wild no 2, as at the time there were not many magazines of this type about. I really liked what I read, but somehow I missed Wild no 3. I would regularly visit the outdoor shop seeking out when the latest Wild would be in. I continued to purchase them every three months until I began to subscribe.

As the years went by I continued to enjoy receiving and reading them, and getting valuable information to help me choose new outdoor gear as the old stuff went past its 'use by date'.

One day I was collecting all the magazines together and realised that Wilds no 1 and 3 were missing, and they were by now out of print. During the early to mid-1990s I found two copies of Wild no 3 floating around our ski lodge. I 'borrowed' one and added it to my collection. Then in 2008 we received a call from one of the older members of our bushwalking club who wanted to donate her Wild magazines to the club library. With sudden excitement I asked, 'Did she have Wild no 1?' To find out, I had to drive across Melbourne, from the southeastern suburbs to the northern suburbs. But luck was on my side – my Wild set was complete. Despite what I was willing to pay she kindly gave it to me.

Thank you for such a great magazine. Since the age of 11, I have been involved with the outdoors (thanks to my three brothers), starting out skiing, then bushwalking, canoeing and cycling and conservation interests. It is part of my 'recovery and sanity' from working with people who have intellectual and physical disabilities. Keep up the good work, I feel that the magazine has improved as the years have gone on.

Wilma Van Dijk
Berwick, Victoria

MORE 30-YEAR REMINISCENCES

In Easter 1985 I was walking south from Dead Horse Gap (in the Kosciuszko National Park) to the Old Tin Mines through some tall mountain ash trees, when we stopped to talk with a couple of other walkers. One of them said to me, 'Hey, aren't you the guy on the cover of Wild?'

Puffing my chest out a little and trying not to seem too pleased at being recognised, I replied, 'Yes, I am.' To which he said, 'I thought so, I recognised the shorts.' It was clear that my 15 minutes of fame were over before they had even started – my shorts were more famous than I was.



And yes, that is me a quarter of a century ago, with more hair and a little less weight. There have been many great adventures in the outdoors for me since then, and I am happy to note that I am still out there enjoying new adventures.

Gary Tischer
Morningside, Queensland

THE WILDSHOT

Your picture of Mt Machapuchare (Wild no 121) reminded me of a 'hand-me-down' book from my brother that was a Sunday School Award, *Climbing the Fish's Tail* by Wilfred Noyce. Noyce had been part of the successful 1953 British expedition first ascent of Mt Everest. During the Mt Machapuchare attempt he looked longingly to the Pamirs where he was later to die.

Noyce and David Cox, as members of a well-equipped expedition, got to within 50 metres of the summit on 2 June 1957, before bad weather forced them to retreat.

The book has many black & white pictures of Mt Machapuchare, Nepalese people and the approach to Base Camp. Many sections of the climb are shown including 'The (narrow) ice ridge above Camp Four', where you can almost feel the exposure. One of the many challenges of the climb was overcome by an improvised rope ladder over a small ridge to avoid a long traverse.

This book also shows how the world has changed in many ways. Permission for an expedition to enter Nepal was not readily granted and one expedition member, Roger Chorley, contracted polio. Pipe smoking was seen as an excellent relaxation.

I have not looked at this treasured book for years, so thank you for the Mt Machapuchare picture. Finally, I think I can remember reading that a Japanese expedition to Mt Machapuchare had promised not to summit, but did not keep this promise.

Keith Maxwell
Seven Hills, NSW

ARON RALSTON AND 127 HOURS

I may just be getting old and crotchety, but this movie (127 Hours) about the guy who cut off his arm is really bugging me. Why financially benefit someone who got into trouble because they were too lazy/stupid/arrogant to give someone even a general idea of where they'd be going? We'll have a movie next about those two stupid Mormons who climbed a tree near the edge of a cliff in the Blue Mountains and fell out. We reward stupidity yet, when a well equipped, experienced expedition gets into trouble, all hell breaks loose.

Keith Binns
Goulburn, NSW

We fear you might be getting old and crotchety Keith, but if it helps we have an article on page 50 about solo walking, take a read. **Editor**

Reader's letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to Wild, 11-15 Buckhurst St, South Melbourne, Vic 3205 or email ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au

Corrections and amplifications

In Wild no 121, in the article 'Obsession with Deception', we failed to print a list of historical sources that the author included:

Jack Thwaites: *Pioneer Tasmanian Bushwalker and Conservationist*, by Simon Kleing

'In the Footsteps of Sir John Franklin', by JB Thwaites, *Walkabout*, 1 December, 1955.

Jack Thwaites' diary, which is found at jackthwaitesbushdiaries.com

Narrative of the Overland Journey of Sir John and Lady Franklin and Party from Hobart Town to Macquarie Harbour 1842, by David Burr.

'Sir John Franklin's Overland Journey to Macquarie Harbour in 1842', by Joan Bucke, *Tasmanian Tramp*, 1953, 3.

Our apologies to all concerned for this omission.

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Kakadu Dreaming



Photographer Darren Saunders writes:
this shot was taken on a ten-day bushwalk along the Kakadu Escarpment. The area is about 15 kilometres east of Jim Jim Falls on Jim Jim Creek. The campsite doesn't have an official name, but we called it Turtle Rock Camp because it had a lovely flat rock-shelf big enough for everyone to sleep on, and we saw two long-necked turtles swimming in the creek. The silhouettes are year-11 students from Firkbank Grammar in Melbourne.

By submitting a *Wild Shot* you can win a superb camera bag from Kata, the Ultra-Light Bumblebee-222 UL, RRP \$450. To be eligible for the prize send your image to ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au, we are after any outdoor shots that are humorous, inspiring, spectacular or all three.



Australian Alps Walking Track First

Renowned sea kayaker Beau Miles has turned landlubber after becoming the first person to run the iconic Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT)

ON 17 MARCH Beau Miles ran into the small hamlet of Walhalla, becoming the first person to have run the track and completing it in a record 14 days – which is an average of 46 kilometres a day! Starting in Canberra, the 650-kilometre track normally takes bushwalkers between six and ten weeks to complete.

Taking into account the roughness of the track – due to both the ruggedness of the country and how overgrown the track is in places – 14 days (140 hours of actual running) is a very impressive time. Beau also navigated entirely with map and compass, eschewing a GPS. He did have a few advantages over most walkers however, as he had a support crew for the run and just had to carry the day's food and a small amount of emergency gear.

Beau reports that the run had some high and low points, 'Running at dawn over Mt Speculation and the Crosscut Saw dropping in and out of the cloud layer was simply incredible.' However, the days of running through bogs and the sections of the track that were overgrown were definite low lights. He also sustained a soft tissue injury that saw one shin swell to nearly twice the size of the other.

The run wasn't without dramas after a number of other runners got wind of Beau's attempt and decided to have a crack themselves – providing an unexpected (and unwelcome) competitive element to the run. Renowned



The ruggedly handsome Beau Miles looking chuffed with himself after becoming the first person to run the Australian Alps Walking Track. Beau Miles collection

ultra-runner Andrew Hewatt (who had previously attempted the run) set off two days after Beau on an unsupported attempt of the track (with food drops), but started from the opposite end. Unfortunately for Hewatt, the southern end of the track suffered from much more severe weather conditions and he ended up pulling out after five days, after rain

and a leaking tent meant that he and his gear were getting increasingly wet.

Beau filmed the run and is planning to make a documentary about the adventure. You can find out more about the film and read blogs about his experience at beaumilesfilm.com; to find out more about Andrew Hewatt's attempt visit alpineultra.blogspot.com

Mountain Running Wrap-up



This year's winner of the Cradle Run, Stuart Gibson, looking a little weary after reaching Narcissus. Bernard Walker

IN EARLY FEBRUARY the annual Cradle Run took place on Tasmania's iconic Overland Track in fine but somewhat muddy conditions. This year the 82-kilometre event was won by first-timer, Scottish-Australian hybrid Stuart Gibson in a very respectable time of 8 hours, 8 minutes, 13 seconds. The record is held by Andy Kromar who ran 7 hours, 25 minutes in 1996. In second place was Dave Heatley in 8 hours, 45 minutes, 51 seconds, while Doug Grubert was third in 8 hours, 49 minutes, 11 seconds. The very impressive Beth Cardelli was the first woman home (and sixth overall), finishing in 9 hours, 46 minutes, 44 seconds. Julie Quinn was second in 10 hours, 20 minutes and Rachel Waugh third in 11 hours, 1 minute, 42 seconds.

Almost as impressive was the editor's father,

Rob Taylor, who at the advanced age of 70 completed the race in 13 hours, 56 minutes, 8 seconds; we won't mention the fact he came second last.

In mid-March the famed Six Foot Track marathon took place with 850 runners taking part in the historic race. Starting at Katoomba and finishing at Jenolan Caves, the first to finish the 45 kilometre course was Andrew Lee in 3 hours, 35 minutes, 22 seconds. Not far behind in second was Brendan Davies in 3 hours, 37 minutes, 27 seconds, with Rob Walter third in 3 hours, 38 minutes, 35 seconds. The first woman home was Kiwi Anna Frost in 3 hours, 52 minutes, 48 seconds, in second place was Vanessa Haverd in 4 hours, 3 minutes, 57 seconds and Cradle Run champion Beth Cardelli was third in 4 hours, 10 minutes, 6 seconds.

Oura Oura Gift

Bush Heritage celebrates its 20-year anniversary with a present from Bob Brown

BOB BROWN, LEADER of the Australian Greens and founder of Bush Heritage Australia, has celebrated the 20-year anniversary of Bush Heritage by gifting his iconic property in the Liffey Valley to the organisation.

The 14-hectare property called 'Oura Oura' sits below Drys Bluff and is crossed by Deans Track, a popular walking track that goes to the top of the bluff. Senator Brown bought the property in 1973 and the house saw many meetings of environmentalists, including some critical to the creation of the Wilderness Society and the

campaign to save the Franklin River.

Bush Heritage itself was founded at Liffey in 1991 after Bob Brown saved two blocks of Tasmanian forest from woodchipping by using his Goldman Environmental Prize as a deposit to buy them. These two blocks formed the beginnings of an organisation that started out entirely volunteer run but now employs 80 people, and has impressively purchased,

protected and manages almost one million hectares of high conservation value land across Australia.

To find out more about Bush Heritage visit bushheritage.com.au

Below and left, Bob Brown and Oura Oura, the property he has now handed over to Bush Heritage's care. Photos courtesy of Bush Heritage




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Bass Strait First

A team of paddlers has achieved its aim of becoming the first people to cross Bass Strait on ocean racing skis. After 12 days, 330 kilometres and an estimated thousand bowls of porridge, the seven-person team reached the Tasmanian mainland on 1 March. Led by adventure racing champion Jarad Kohlar, the posse of paddlers had to deal with huge open stretches of open water and potentially treacherous conditions during the crossing, including an epic 80 kilometre, ten-hour leg from Deal Island to Flinders Island, immediately followed by a seven-and-a-half-hour paddle to Cape Barren Island, and a tricky final leg across the feared Banks Strait from Thunder and Lightning Bay on Cape Barren Island. The trip was never intended as a pleasure cruise though, and besides the hard graft that the team put in on the water during their dangerous endeavour, they were also out there to collect rubbish, raise money and spread the message about marine debris on behalf of Surfrider Foundation (surfrider.org.au). Check out cleanacrossbassstrait.com for more.



Team Bass Strait, the first paddlers to cross the Bass Strait on ocean racing skis.
Image courtesy of Peak Adventure

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Cattle and High Country Update

If cattlemen and the Victorian State Government won the first round of the fight to keep cattle in the Alpine National Park, environmentalists have taken out the second round after the Federal Environment Minister, Tony Burke, ordered cattlemen to remove their stock from the park in March. They were given until the 8 April to remove them, although many have claimed that they would have pulled them out anyway in anticipation of the coming winter.

The third round was another embarrassing loss to the Victorian Government when the University of Sydney forest ecologist Mark Adams, the man the Victorian Government commissioned to carry out its 'scientific study', told the government that he would not take part until it had sorted out problems with the design and management of the study.

While both these outcomes do not guarantee that cattle won't be back in the park in the future, they are significant wins for the environmental movement and hopefully presage the permanent banning of cattle – a battle many thought had already been won.



The Bogong High Plains is slowly recovering from cattle damage. Karen Alexander

Wilsons Promontory Flooding and a Plague of Mosquitoes

If it wasn't enough that we nearly lost most of Queensland and Western Victoria to near-biblical floods, in late-March Wilsons Promontory received 370 millimetres of rain within a 24-hour period, causing extensive damage to the park. At the time of writing Parks had just opened the northern part of the park, while they were hoping to reopen Tidal River in time for Easter. Elsewhere in

Victoria large parts of the Grampians are still closed to the public, while there has also been over 100 reported cases of the Ross River Virus in the Wimmera. The Ross River Virus is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause anything from flu-like symptoms to severe pain. Anyone visiting the area should take care to cover up. To check the details of what isn't accessible, visit parkweb.vic.gov.au

Phytophthora threatens the Fitzgerald River National Park

A planned \$40 million tourism upgrade that includes a host of new walking tracks is facing opposition in Western Australia.

The Fitzgerald River National Park is a World Biosphere Reserve in Western Australia's southwest that is home to a rich diversity of rare and endangered plants and animals, including 100 plant species that are endemic to the park. Remote parts of the park have been closed for the last 20 years in an effort to protect this host of precious biodiversity – now that appears all set to change.

Back in 2009, WA Premier Colin Barnett promised a \$40 million dollar upgrade to the park in an effort to attract eco-tourism to the region. The plan is to build sealed roads, camping facilities and new bushwalking tracks, including a 60 kilometre coastal walk that goes through the designated reserve area that has been closed off for 20 years. Environmentalists hold grave fears that the new tracks could introduce the deadly fungal disease *Phytophthora* (literally 'destroyer of plants') to these previously protected areas of the park. *Phytophthora* attacks the roots of plants, many of which are critical for the continued existence of the honey possum, the rare western ground parrot and a carnivorous marsupial called a dibbler – which was long thought extinct.

The WA Department of Environment and Conservation has dismissed fears about spread of *Phytophthora*, arguing that the new tracks will be operated under improved management conditions that will limit the spread of the disease. Whether or not the new management program will be effective is a matter of great debate, given the rapid spread of the disease in other Australian parks and this is why local environmental groups and scientists are firmly opposed to the new developments.

To find out more about the Fitzgerald River National Park visit fitzgeraldfriends.org.au

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Anemone Stinkhorn *Aseroe rubra*

Bushwalkers finding the bright red, multiarmed fruit-body of the anemone stinkhorn bursting from its egg-like sac could be forgiven for thinking miniature aliens had landed. The common name anemone stinkhorn comes from the resemblance to a sea anemone, but it is in fact a fungus, a member of the stinkhorn family; an assemblage of bizarre forms sharing strongly-smelling fruit-bodies that usually produce a slimy mass of millions of tiny spores.

The initial stage of anemone stinkhorn is an egg-shaped sac that encloses the developing fruit-body in a thick layer with the consistency of stiff jelly. At maturity, the full glory of the brightly coloured fruit-body is revealed when it bursts from the sac. There is a hollow stem up to ten centimetres long, and extending from the top of the stem are six to nine red arms, tapering towards their tips, where they divide in two (bifid). The torn remains of the sac remain at the base of the stem.

Spores from fungi such as mushrooms or puffballs are blown by the wind, but the slimy spores of stinkhorns rely on animals for dispersal. Flies can frequently be observed feeding on the greenish spore mass that sits at the base of the arms of the anemone stinkhorn, presumably attracted to the foul odour of the mature fruit-body, resembling rotten meat or faeces.

The anemone stinkhorn is quite common at high altitudes in southeastern Australia among snow grass, such as in the Victorian Alps. However, further north along the eastern seaboard it is not limited to high country, and in Tasmania it is found both at high altitude and in myrtle beech rainforest.

Like other stinkhorns, anemone stinkhorn feeds on dead organic matter and thus contributes to nutrient recycling. Wood-chip mulch in urban areas is a ready food source for the fungus. It and other stinkhorns, such as the squid stinkhorn, are commonly reported outside their natural distribution in mulched beds in parks and gardens, where massed fruitings can occur. Indeed, some Australian stinkhorns have travelled across the globe, such as to Western Europe; perhaps imported around the time of the First World War through spores in soil on wheat sacks or other packaging materials from Australia.

A variety of unusual forms have evolved in the stinkhorn family: including regular stinkhorns, with their phallic fruit-bodies; crinoline fungi, where the stem is demurely hidden under a lacy petticoat; cage fungi, looking for all the world like geo-domes; as well as weird and wonderful species such as the cray-pot stinkhorn and the lizard-claw stinkhorn. Stinkhorns are found worldwide, and are especially diverse in Australia. In eucalypt forests there is even a truffle-like version, where the fruit-body remains underground.

A unique odour akin to garlic dipped in kerosene attracts native animals such as bettongs and possums that dig up and eat the fruit-bodies.

The anemone stinkhorn is similar to the seastar stinkhorn (*Anthurus archeri*). However, the former has bifid arms with the spore mass sitting at the base of the arms, while the latter has three to eight unbranched arms with the slime along the arms.



Photographer Jen Georgiou writes: '*Aseroe rubra* is one of nature's more interesting looking species. We came across this on our way down Mt Cobberas in the Victorian highlands. Thank goodness we did because when I went to photograph it I discovered that I'd left the camera a little way back at our afternoon tea break.'

Anemone stinkhorn was the first Australian fungus to be formally named. The botanist Jacques-Julien Labillardiere gave it the name *Aseroe rubra* after observing it in May 1792 at Recherche Bay in southeastern Tasmania, during a French expedition in search of the lost explorer La Pérouse. Forest in the vicinity has recently been permanently preserved by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy.

Anemone stinkhorn is one of the target species of the Australia-wide Fungimap scheme, a mapping project for fungi readily recognisable in the field. See rbg.vic.gov.au/fungimap/ for details of how to join and submit records.

Tom May

To submit a photo for All Things Great and Small contact ross.taylor@pmccreative.com.au. We will accept photos of plants or animals and pay at our standard rate. Published photos will be accompanied by some history that we will source.

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The Tarkine Under Threat (Again)

The home of the largest and least fragmented cool temperate rainforest in Australia is facing the imminent threat of mining

LEAKED DOCUMENTS, MINING deals and protests sound like a combination you would expect in a movie, but for Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke, this is reality. Environment groups were outraged when Minister Burke allowed the emergency heritage listing of the Tarkine wilderness area in Northwest Tasmania to lapse, potentially opening the door to more mining in the area.

Andrew Macintosh, an environmental law expert from the Australia National University, explains that the National Heritage List identifies places that have outstanding value to the nation, and that it is supposed to ensure that the heritage significance of these places is considered when decisions are being made about land use activities, such as mining. He says, 'When a place is not on the list, its heritage values "disappear" from the federal environmental approval process, so when assessing projects, the Minister doesn't consider its heritage values, regardless of how significant they are. In effect, the bar for approval is lowered.'

Minister Burke announced that the reason he let the listing of the Tarkine lapse was because the threat that originally prompted its inclusion on the National Heritage List, the Tarkine tourist road

proposal, had been withdrawn.

But Andrew Macintosh questions this reasoning 'This makes no sense. He had a statutory duty to make a final decision, whether or not the road proposal was still on foot was irrelevant.'

Shree Minerals submitted plans to the government to develop an open cut mine in the Tarkine and extract 1.2 million tonnes of hematite, worth about \$200 million. 'I think the real reason Minister Burke allowed it to lapse was that he wanted the Tarkine off the list to facilitate the approval of the mining projects that were proposed for the area. He knew that by letting the listing lapse, he can approve the mines without considering the Tarkine's heritage significance.'

Unfortunately for the Government someone decided to leak the Australian Heritage Council's assessment report, which clearly states that the Tarkine met the criteria to be permanently included on the National Heritage List. The leaked report has given environmental groups some very strong ammunition to work with in their battle against mining interests, as the Council's assessment clearly carries a lot of weight.

Macintosh explains that the proposed mine will adversely affect the wilderness and aesthetic values of the Tarkine. 'The Tarkine contains the largest and least fragmented cool temperate rainforest in Australia, is home to globally significant

magnetite karsts, is a veritable storehouse for rare and threatened biodiversity, contains sites of Aboriginal archaeological significance and has outstanding wilderness and aesthetic values.' He says any new mines would permanently damage the Tarkine and deprive Australia of one of its most important and treasured areas.

In an attempt to try and answer these environmental concerns, Minister Burke ordered a full environmental impact assessment for the proposed mine. 'I have made this decision due to particular sensitivities around matters protected by national environmental law, including the endangered Tasmanian devil,' Mr Burke said. 'Given these sensitivities, it is appropriate that this proposal goes through a high level of assessment under national environmental law. That's why I have decided that the project will be assessed through an environmental impact statement, which will include public consultation in which the community will have an opportunity to make submissions.'

However, environment groups are justifiably concerned this assessment will be too narrow as it won't be able to consider heritage issues – a direct consequence of Tony Burke allowing the emergency heritage listing to lapse.

To find out more about the Tarkine and how you can register your protest against mining in the region, go to Tarkine.org



A bushwalker heading south from Temma down the Tarkine coast; the Tarkine is facing the threat of further mining. Ross Taylor

The Pulp Mill Saga (continues...)



Protesters make their point at the Tenth Island seal colony, just ten kilometres from where the effluent from the mill will be released. Jon Bryan

The government gives the pulp mill the green light, but the mill is still far from a certain proposition

DESPITE FEDERAL ENVIRONMENT Minister Tony Burke's recent announcement giving final approval for Gunns Ltd to build a pulp mill in the Tamar Valley, the battle over Tasmania's wilderness seems far from over.

Vica Bayley of the Wilderness Society says that although the mill can now legally be built and operated, it still fails to achieve both financial security and a social licence to operate. 'The pulp mill fails the grade on many issues, including impacts on the marine environment, location and lack of an adequate and independent assessment. As a result, many leading banks and paper companies have refused to fund the project.' Furthermore, 'The majority of residents in the Tamar Valley and across Tasmania are strongly opposed to the project.'

The lack of community support was certainly clear in mid-March this year when more than 1300 opponents turned up to protest near the mill's proposed site in northern Tasmania. Bayley suggests that without strong community confidence, the Mill is likely to struggle to attract financial backing. The battle has been a long one, with many wins and losses for concerned environment groups along the way. Bayley says, 'One issue that has been resolved is timber use. Gunns announced that the mill will be 100 per cent plantation-based and this fact is written into the federal approval. As the mill was originally planned to consume native forests, this is a step forward and a positive outcome of years of campaign and public pressure that the people should be proud of.'

But despite these improvements, many people are still concerned about other significant impacts that haven't been adequately considered and the legacy issues associated with the fast-track approval process. 'Among the issues of concern is the dumping of effluent into Bass Strait and the consequential impact on marine life, the massive use of fresh water, and the release of odour and pollution into the air,' says Bayley. According to him the area also regularly suffers from inversion layers where emissions can get trapped and hang in the valley for longer, rather than being blown away by the wind.

The Wilderness Society believes that there are both better locations for a pulp mill, and better alternatives to process plantations and deliver maximum regional development, employment and environmental outcomes.

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Let it Flow

A new study shows that allowing larger and more numerous environmental flows to the Murray River will help combat the spread of weeds

THE MAJORITY OF US are familiar with the constant battle with weeds that invade our garden, but new research has revealed that weeds can be problematic on a massive scale, threatening entire ecosystems along the iconic Australian river, the Murray.

Scientists have reported that human-



Weed-infested wetlands near Yarrawonga, Victoria. Jane Catford

induced changes to the flow of the Murray River have led to mass weed invasion and reduced biodiversity in wetlands along the riverbank, highlighting the need for a review into how we manage the river's flow.

Dr Jane Catford from the University of Melbourne led a study, which provides valuable information on how best to guide the delivery of water to combat environmental problems. 'We have always thought that the huge problem of weed invasion along the Murray River had something to do with the changes in flow but this is the first time we have been able to identify what kind of flow alterations have had most impact,' Dr Catford said. She says the control of the Murray's flow by dams and weirs has meant that floods that would have occurred every ten years are now occurring every 24 years. The altered flooding patterns and in particular the reduction in the size of natural floods, have been found to be more conducive to alien species than native plants. According to Dr

Catford this has had a profound negative effect; 'The introduction of alien plants has dramatically changed the structure and function of these wetlands, which provide crucial habitat and food for a range of birds, fish, turtles and other animals and also play a critical role in filtering water.'

As a result of the new evidence scientists are now calling for a change in how we manage the Murray. 'Environmental flows will help redress the balance between native and alien species,' Dr Catford says. 'Given that environmental water allocations are typically limited, it is essential that release decisions are science-based. We recommend that environmental water be used to augment natural floods that typically occur in spring.' The study shows that increasing the size and regularity of mid-range floods will be most effective in killing weeds as well as encouraging the growth and reproduction of native plants.

A Northern Corridor for Nature?

As part of a bold new plan to slow or even reverse the extinction crisis Australia is facing, wildlife of northern Australia could soon have 3000 kilometres of interconnected protected areas to roam

STUART BLANCH OF the Environment Centre of the Northern Territory has long believed the solution to conserving precious biodiversity lies in conservation corridors. 'In order to survive, many species of wildlife need to be able to move large distances to find water and food during the long hot dry season, to escape wildfires or predators, to find mates, and to find new habitats if theirs is destroyed,' he explains. 'Linking these important habitats for wildlife across the landscape through a series of protected areas is essential for these species to survive.'

Blanch says that the savannahs of northern Australia are not only home to unique threatened and abundant wildlife, but they also act as a globally significant carbon bank storing billions of tons of carbon. But the area is facing threats from a range of factors including major development, wildfires and invasive species. According to Blanch, 'The high conservation value of northern

Australia's savannahs calls for such a bold plan to slow the wave of extinction washing over our wildlife, and start bringing them back to the bush.'

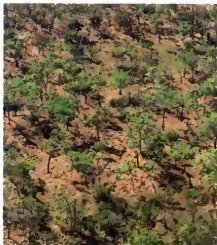
Titled the Kimberley to Cape Initiative, the plan is to establish a patchwork quilt of protected areas that conserves half of northern Australia's savannahs, stretching some 3000 kilometres from Cairns to Broome, including some of the world's last remaining ecologically intact areas: Cape York, the Gulf Country, the Top End and the Kimberley.

'The plan is to protect and sustainably manage the world's largest tropical savannah and major network of free-flowing tropical rivers – it will prove a globally significant initiative,' Blanch says. All new protected areas would only be established following significant consultation and only with the free, prior and informed consent of Traditional Owners. 'Kimberley to Cape would strengthen the conservation and cultural economy in remote and rural areas by assisting Indigenous communities to access and manage country, develop nature and culture tourism businesses, and encourage payments for ecosystem services

such as carbon farming and land management.'

The Kimberley to Cape plan is in its early stages but Blanch hopes the initiative will be widely supported and developed in 2012.

To find out more or to see how you can help, please contact Dr Stuart Blanch, Coordinator of the Environment Centre NT in Darwin at coordinator@ecnt.org



Daly River savannah, Northern Territory. Stuart Blanch

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Snapping To It

Quentin Chester unwinds the twisted strands of brotherhood and photography



'As one who loves to be in the thick of the action he made straight for the water's edge, where wave spray burst off the black rocks and crested terns banked in from across the bay to join their throng beside by a large tidal pool. Not for him the detached, finicky image-making of the wilderness aesthetes.'

He's short and dark; I'm tall and fairish. He's a doer and a goer; I stall and muse. He's a gear nut, a technophile; I'm all wordy. He likes cold places, I like hot spots. He's runs Macs; I'm a PC kinda guy. He lives in Midwest USA; I'm on an island 16 000 kilometres away. We're different, often surprisingly so. Yet the long and short of it is we're also brothers. More to the point, there are ways in which we're as close as any siblings can be.

This notion appeared around sunrise at the rocky end of Wheatons Beach on Kangaroo Island. My brother Jonathan and I were together again. A hurrying southerly wind was on our backs. It slung the spray off the tops of the incoming waves while a lid of grey cloud domed overhead like an upturned colander. Huge spokes of dawn light beamed down between the gaps.

Standing there among a spread of stone on the edge of the sea we were mere flecks in the landscape. It seemed a suitably theatrical stage for our first time alone together in the wilds for more than ten years. No matter that distance and family duties separate us; our common ground is strong. As brothers we're both suckers for big terrain and pumped-up weather. So yes, our destination was in character. However the cause that brought us together on this coast happened to be something that had long set us apart: photography.

For more than 30 years Jonathan has frequented the world's mountains and polar places. He's a man of many hats and lots of gloves. In fact, no one I know hugs more bags on their travels. That's partly his mania for being prepared for anything, and mostly because he never leaves home without a serious swag of camera gear.

To Jonathan, photography is a vocation – and then some. What began as a chronicle of climbs and other adventures quickly became an extension of self, a single lens reflex response to almost every situation. From the New Zealand Alps and the Andes, to the Himalaya, the Arctic and Antarctica, his life has unspooled as an incredible array of journeys. Along the way, no corniced ridge or penguin colony, nor any glacier, seal or iceberg has gone unrecorded. Out of thousands of images has come a steady stream of books, multimedia shows, calendars and magazine stories.

To see Jonathan at work along Wheatons Beach was to be reminded of his boundless, bullocking energy. As one who loves to be in

the thick of the action he made straight for the water's edge, where wave spray burst off the black rocks and crested terns banked in from across the bay to join their throng beside by a large tidal pool. Not for him the detached, finicky image-making of the wilderness aesthetes. No, he has always buried himself in those moments when blizzards rage or an icebreaker's bow crashes an oncoming wave. Like a frontline newshound he chases the adrenalin shots.

For me it was a glimpse of the Jonathan of old, the bustling elder brother who inducted me into the outdoor life of climbing and skiing. I was still a pasty-faced schoolboy when we both started to pore over expedition yarns like Eric Shipton's *Upon that Mountain* and Chris Bonnington's *Annapurna South Face*. Had it not been for Jonathan I would still be lost in those pages. Instead, I slippedreamed his action-man adventures to many Mounts: Arapiles, Buffalo, Bogong and Cook.

It took a few years but at some point both of us gave up our day jobs and stumbled in ad hoc work as climbers, guides and errant journalists. This befuddled a few bystanders. How do two brothers wander from the straight-and-narrow end up, literally, on the rocks? 'Your parents must be worried,' they said. Some people imagined there was some fierce sibling rivalry driving this madness. Others got Jonathan and I mixed up. 'Are you the one who does that mountain climbing business, or is that your brother?' It didn't help when I said: 'Well, we sort of both do actually.'

The truth is, each of us more or less fell into our freelance lives by accident. As for rivalry, well that's never really been part of the equation. An age difference of seven years meant we were more like very close cousins. Being the younger, more timorous party I naturally deferred to Jonathan's experience and gung-ho style.

That said, I did assume the role of his occasional editor and counsellor. It grew into a symbiotic relationship. Having dabbled in the mountains I knew enough to live vicariously through my brother's escapades. During Jonathan's more hair-raising expeditions to Antarctica or 8000 metre Himalayan peaks, I became his de facto special envoy. That meant having to sporadically translate scraps of news into a placating narrative for family and friends.

Over time we each carved out our own niche. Jonathan moved to the USA, while I

Right, the author's brother, Jonathan Chester, at work at Pennington Bay, Kangaroo Island, South Australia. Quentin Chester

stayed on the home patch. He focused on all things polar and penguin, whereas my subjects were parochially Australian and, at times, overtly outback. Most of all, I was the writer and he was the Chester boy with all the cameras.

To me his output of images was overwhelming. These photos were a window on terrain that few had visited and fewer still had photographed. Not just that but it was one of my brothers taking these shots, a boy from the nondescript Adelaide Hills willing himself into the kind of existence I assumed people like us could only ever read about. For several years his personal world seemed like one continuous expedition, a headlong rush of schemes and plans, departures and physical extremes in places impossibly remote. His life whirled, as if on its own motor drive.

In these early stages, it's true, there were moments when the cameras took over. Hanging out with Jonathan could be disconcerting, such were the breaches of personal space and interruptions to frame shots. He pushed hard to make photography a career. For him, conventional urban life was like an ill-fitting suit. As a result many long nights were spent alone hunched over the light table. It seemed that the slides were a way for him to inhabit the clarity of those expedition days, the giddy, high-keyed emotions the mountains generated.

As much as I too lapped up the images, I had none of my brother's faith in cameras. Being hopeless with machinery, photography became just another of my shortcomings. Out bush all the images were dazzlingly sharp in my mind's eye, but the slides that came back a few weeks later in the little yellow Kodak boxes were mostly dreary duds. So I started to believe that being bothered with photos was unworthy of me, and that as a writer I should aspire to higher things. If pressed I mumbled that cameras 'intruded on the organic flow of experience' or some such drivel.

So how come I recently spent five sunrises in a row with my brother madly photographing the wilder fringes of Kangaroo Island? And why is a camera – and a two-kilo monster at that – now my favourite bushwalking toy? The short answer is: opportunism and technology finally won me over. Going digital means I can blunder around committing photographic sins without it costing a thing. Not just that, but if I keep twiddling buttons there's a faint chance I'll fluke a good shot, plus see the results on the spot.



This mid-life about-face also reflects a different tempo to work and travel. Doing writing assignments with high priests of photography like Bill Bachman and Nick Rains has prodded me to look a little more intently at the visual language of a setting. At the same time, to live in an unbelievably photogenic location like Kangaroo Island makes it feel a little bit rude not to pay one's respects with the odd snap or two. Being resident in the thick of it all means you're freed of the pressure to shoot and run. There's time to craft images, to get a fix on sites and return every few days in all sorts of light and weather.

I need to point out that my 'new' camera is a superseded model and second-hand. Ditto my tripod, a heavy-duty brute that weighs as much as a small tent. Hauling this bulky apparatus around the bush is one small measure of how far my conversion has come. I've grown to like the sturdiness of the gear and I can't complain about the results. Indeed a high point of my time at D'Estrees Bay was the compliments Jonathan paid to a few of my shots.

These days nearly everyone gripes about the influx of gadgets and technology in their lives. I do it all the time. But that's mostly because I can't keep up with the changes. What does seem really odd is how many people vent on the internet about the wickedness of social media. Or claim that texting or gaming or the latest app will be the end of civilisation as we imagined we once knew it. The buried assumption is that humans are powerless to resist, whereas history shows most people eventually grab what they need from technology and then get on with their lives.

On the face of it the camera is nothing more than a device for enjoying where I am.


In isolation the individual images are merely pleasing snapshots. However, once let loose, photos are never truly alone. In their own way they get a life as part of our private flossam of finding and remembering. Should they then find their way to a wider audience – via the internet or other means – these modest photos get a chance to sink or swim in the flood of images our shared lives have become.

For a while it suited me to believe that photography was an affront to knowing nature. Now, suddenly, it's one of the things that keeps me honest. It gets me out the door and into the fray of weather and landscape. To my mind anything that does this can't be all bad. There are other, backhanded benefits too. There's a certain irony in the fact that the more time I'm on my own doing the camera thing, the more excuses I have to connect with friends and strangers.

I also love the fact that the more pictures I take, the more I notice what the camera misses. So when I'm on my favourite coastal cliffs in the early light I keep realising that no lens can possibly cram it all in – from the seals bobbing to the surface of the gem-green water all the way up to the rowdy gulls that seem to tag along with me every time, tumbling and screeching high above the inlets. Nor, of course, can a photo capture the thrash of the waves below or the spiced smell of tussocks in the moist sea air, or the threads in the story that lead back to a long lost brother. But that's okay, that's where the words come in.

*A Wild contributor since issue no 3, Quentin Chester is a freelance journalist and the author of six books about wilderness places.
Blog: quentinchester.blogspot.com*

HUAYHUASH WANDERING



Just over 500 kilometres northwest of Machu Picchu, in central Peru, lie deserted tracks meandering through Quechua farming hamlets in an isolated pocket of the Peruvian Andes, a place where perfect campsites in the shadow of majestic 6500 metre spires overlook turquoise alpine lagoons. *Mark Watson* joined *Touching the Void*'s Simon Yates on a remarkable journey to navigate a track described by *besthike.com* as 'arguably the best hike in the world'

Words and images by *Mark Watson*

Where I find myself just happens to be pronounced 'why wash', and that is the question I ponder as a crystal-clear brook softly gurgles past me. I cannot ever remember having seen clearer water. The occasional trout splashes a tiny fireworks display of sunlit water drops upstream, where the last light hits the sparkling silver rivulet snaking its way towards a distant glacier. 'An invigorating dip' is what my British trekking companion Sheila would call it, but I am from convict stock and so stick with simple language, 'It's going to be bloody freezing!'

Don't get me wrong, I can't think of a more picturesque spot to wash off a week's worth of dust, mud,

sweat and embedded scree shards. Surrounding my natural bathtub is the Peruvian Andes' Cordillera Huayhuash, where 6500 metre peaks jut up from colossal glaciers and glass-like alpine tarns mirror the snow-capped summits. I am in desperate need of a bath, but the temperature was 20°C an hour ago, now I am guessing it is lucky to be ten degrees and I expect the next hour will see the mercury fall to below zero.

And so I ponder, 'why wash?'

But then I consider when I will next have the opportunity to soak away a week's worth of weariness under the first star, while overlooking a panorama of magnificent spires trailing spindrift high into a cloudless

Andean sky? Perhaps never.

I jump into the icy torrent.

It took two weeks to find this majestic bathtub; a flight halfway around the world, a lengthy bus journey on dodgy roads and the circumnavigation of an entire Andean mountain range, but good things don't come easy and this certainly is 'good'.

Bordering Ecuador and Colombia to the north, Brazil and Bolivia to the east and Chile to the south, Peru is best known for its ancient Incan history, Amazon rainforest and Machu Picchu – where more than 2000

Bordering the eastern flanks of Huaraz the Cordillera Blanca stretches 180 kilometres north and south. **Inset**, a local Quechuan woman wearing a bowler or bombin as they are called in Peru.



visitors a day wheeze and gasp their way to 2500 metres above sea level to glimpse this ancient Incan wonder. Little do many know that only 530 kilometres to the northwest, and a further 2000 metres towards the stratosphere, lie narrow burn (donkey) tracks meandering through Yosemite-sized vertical slabs of limestone and ice in a rugged but picturesque walker's paradise.

Surprisingly, the Cordillera Huayhuash remains the property of the Quechuan mountain people and doesn't have any World Heritage or protected status. Camping and grazing fees are paid directly to villagers, and *arieros* (donkey-drivers) supplement their minimal farming income with that of the emerging ecotourism industry.

The 12-day Huayhuash circuit is not for the faint of heart. Each day averages six to eight hours of negotiating valley streams, steep inclines, rocky passes and vast scree slopes. Mountain sickness is a real threat and not to be taken lightly, with the route most days sitting somewhere around 4500 metres above sea level and passes up to

5000 metres, where oxygen intake is less than half that at sea level. However, the risks are worth the reward of circumnavigating this dramatic 30-kilometre-long pocket of the Andes, home to Peru's second highest



mountain Yerupaja (6617 metres) and five further peaks exceeding 6000 metres.

The area remains relatively unexplored by Westerners, but this is changing as ecotourism has an effect on the traditional lives of the Quechuan farming communities. The change brings both

positive and negative transformation to a region still recovering from a revolutionary past. In the 1990s the entire region was closed to travellers when it became one of the last remaining strongholds for the *Sendero Luminoso* (aka Shining Path), a revolutionary group intent on turning Peru into a communist state. Prior to the 1990s the region was mostly visited by mountaineers looking for challenges in the vast glaciated terrain and vertical ice and snow flutings characteristic of the region's dramatic peaks. In the mid-1980s the area became the stage for one of climbing's most harrowing tales, that of Simon Yates and Joe Simpson's near death experience on Siula Grande (6344 metres). Simpson's book, *Touching the Void*, quickly became a best seller and later an award winning film.

However, the new millennium has offered up a new future for the Huayhuash. A playground of immense beauty and ruggedness, the Huayhuash is definitely no ugly-duckling sibling to Peru's famous Cordillera Blanca and Inca Trail but rather a 'yet to be discovered' Cinderella.



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DAYS ONE AND TWO: SYDNEY - LIMA - HUARAZ

Arriving in Lima is like landing amidst the pandemonium of a frantic film set. The traffic chaos hints of Thailand or China, but the landscape of sand, shanty shacks and rubble is that of a country climbing out of poverty. My schedule means I have flown from a recent skiing assignment in the Southern Alps of New Zealand to Peru, and I hope to thaw my frost-nipped toes exploring the hidden delights of Lima, which reportedly lie somewhere beneath the haze of fog and smog.

Less than 12 hours after arriving I am on an eight-and-a-half-hour bus journey to the mountain city of Huaraz. It is here I try to determine whether I am out of my depth or not. I consider myself in decent physical condition, but a turn of conversation reveals I have found myself amongst a group of long distance walking and altitude junkies: with experience from the 1000-kilometre Bibbulmun Track to the European Alps, Atlas Mountains in Morocco and the Himalaya. My occasional sojourns and photography missions pale in comparison with some of the

aftermentioned achievements. But talk is talk, and I find it vaguely amusing when a competition begins as to who has suffered the worst from altitude... I expect we will all get a dose of the 'dizzies and headaches' before our expedition is over.

DAYS THREE AND FOUR: ACCLIMATISATION AND FIRST TASTES

The dizzies and headaches rear their ugly heads early. However, it is not the altitude that is responsible, rather I suspect it is my fondness for the traditional Peruvian cocktail Pisco Sour (Pisco, lemon juice and egg-white) that sullies my first morning in Huaraz. Fortunately a hearty breakfast negates the effects of the Pisco and I am soon ready again to tackle the Andes. Having survived the first night intact I immediately consider myself immune to mountain sickness, that is until I realise we haven't even begun our acclimatisation.

Only an hour from Huaraz my first taste of altitude is encountered on the Laguna Churup track as it snakes its way up to 4485 metres, where crystal clear turquoise waters are dwarfed by the summit of Nevado Churup (5495 metres).



The author pauses for a photo atop San Antonio Pass, midway through the trek. *Sal Abubakar. Right, a local cactus in flower.*

reduce inflammation, but I am happy with my modern, lightweight combination of Diamox, Paracetamol and Codeine.

The next morning I reduce my gear to what I will need for the next week, loading it on to yet another bus for yet another day of diesel-fuelled bone jarring. Tonight we will reach Camp One and from there our journey is all on foot, so I enjoy the time spent sitting... or rather bouncing, to Camp One.

metres on Cacanapunta (Rocky Pass), a local *arriero* dances past, skipping from one rock to another while directing fully laden *burros*. I am sure he is silently chuckling at us gringos wheezing and panting.

The growing trekking and climbing scene in the Cordillera Huayhuash has recently created a thriving mountain guide industry, and *arrieros* are an integral part of every expedition as each *burro* is able to carry up to

“Shut-up”, I scream from my tent as I hurl another rock into the darkness. The barking stops for a minute or two. I am quickly learning that the stray dogs surrounding this campsite do not believe in sleep.

DAYS FOUR AND FIVE: CANINES AND BURROS

‘Shut-up’, I scream from my tent as I hurl another rock into the darkness. The barking stops for a minute or two. I am quickly learning that the stray dogs surrounding this campsite do not believe in sleep. My usual sympathy for the canine species runs out by 3am, but a few pieces of limestone shale bouncing in the vicinity of the barking has an effect. This rare technique of rock-persuasion finally allows me to fall asleep in the early hours of the morning.

All angry thoughts are forgotten on exiting the tent on my first day. Directly out my tent door the 5607-metre Ninashanca glows in the early morning sun. I marvel at the vista while gulping down cups of coca tea, but preparations for our long day soon drag me from my ogling.

Straight out of camp we climb directly to the first pass. While gasping for air at +690

30 kilograms of food and supplies. This is five-star trekking, but the Huayhuash can be either completed super light and solo or by utilising the services of local mountain people and hiring a team of *arrieros*, *burros* and guides.

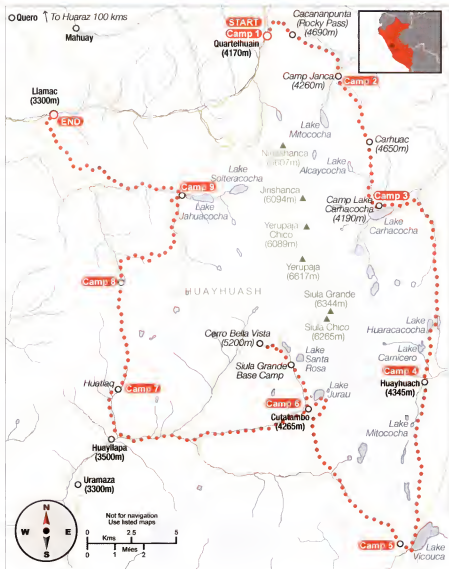
I am used to carrying everything, so I rapidly become a huge fan of *burros* and their ability to somehow co-ordinate all four legs in places I struggle to co-ordinate two. I also like the fact that they don’t seem to mind hauling my sleeping mat, tent and clothes. All I need on my back is my camera, down jacket, waterproofs and food... Come to think of it, I have completed multiday walks with pretty much just that anyway.

Cacanapunta is left behind and we travel on, the routine of camp low, climb high beginning: Camp Janca (4260 metres), Carhuac [Yanapunta] (4650 metres), Camp Lake Carhuacocha (+190 metres)...the list goes on. It is at Lake Carhuacocha, on our

The striking vistas of the Cordillera Blanca (White Mountain Range) rear above the surrounding Andean foothills and my acclimatisation day reveals native lupine shrubs, brilliant red paperbark, Quenna trees and five-metre high flowering agave perennials (*Agave cordillerensis*) on which giant hummingbirds feed.

I begin to nestle into a comfortable trekking reverie as my GPS exudes data in a vain attempt to claw me back to the digitised western world: average vertical speed five kilometres per hour, max vertical ascent 18 metres per minute, moving time two hours, 34 minutes... But I am soon immersed in the world of the Andes. Descending back towards Huaraz, a prominent pre-Incan ceremonial meeting place is nestled high above the fast growing city. Bordering the track medicinal plants are in abundance. Some are chewed to alleviate the symptoms of altitude sickness, while others are combined with pig fat to





The tiny figures of four trekkers are overshadowed by the grand massif surrounding Nevado Churup (5495 metres) and the turquoise waters of Laguna Churup. **Bottom right**, the sun sets on Jurau D (5674 metres).

third night on the track, when the Huayhuash rewards us with a spectacular sight. Late in the afternoon the heavens gather to form dark clouds and snow begins to fall, followed by hail and more snow. Just as the sun dips below the horizon the storm clears, and looking out from my tent the vista of Lake Carhuacocha lies before me. I am offered up a breathtaking mountain panorama of the freshly snow capped Yerupaja (6617 metres), Yerupaja Chico (6089 metres) and Jirishanca (6094 metres). It is this moment, when the 'other world' of work and deadlines slowly fades, that I begin to absorb the mountains and start to unwind, relaxing into the routine of trekking.

DAYS SIX AND SEVEN: REBOOTING THE PSYCHE

My Huayhuash wandering must be having an impact on me, on day six my journal reads:

These places are hard to find, and even harder to get to. There is no flying to such scenes, no driving, no riding, only the simple act of walking gets you here, cleansing the body and mind of the accumulated debris of everyday life and rebooting the psyche.

I sit here at 4500 metres in the Cordillera Huayhuash and I have found this place, this moment. I have finally 'central-alt-deleted' my mind and am once again ready for the challenges of life. We all need this reboot from time to time, and I am fortunate that the Huayhuash has

delivered just the prescription in a perfect dose.

By now the giants of the Huayhuash have dwarfed me for nearly a week and my enjoyment of the simplicity of the trekker's life is evident not only in my journal, but also in those around me. Sal, the Antipodean and self-confessed gear freak, glances less at his GPS and more at the vista every day; the ramblings of Bibbulmun veteran Craig slow as he appreciates another brilliant glacial lake; and Sharon's tuneless Irish voice takes on an awe-inspired note as we traverse another exposed col. Even Simon Yates, a man who has seen it all and who constantly searches the massif above for new lines and routes to new summits admits: 'It's incredible to circumnavigate an entire range and get every aspect of the mountains; each pass and valley is different.' It appears our small posse of leather-booted nature admirers and adventure seekers have all discovered their own patch of paradise in the Huayhuash.

'These places are hard to find, and even harder to get to. There is no flying to such scenes, no driving, no riding; only the simple act of walking gets you here, cleansing the body and mind of the accumulated debris of everyday life and rebooting the psyche.'

DAYS EIGHT AND NINE: HANGOVERS AND CONDORS

My altitude hangovers cease after I discover the benefits of my 'magic pills' early on; a dose of Diamox allows me to sleep through the night and wake headache free. The Diamox replaces the Codeine and Paracetamol combo I scoff to keep the afternoon headaches at bay after realising the coca tea isn't enough. We have all suffered altitude sickness to varying degrees, but I am intrigued by the fact that I appear to be the only person whose body is mixed up. I don't seem to mind climbing high, but it is on the descent that the headaches kick in. Javier calls it an altitude hangover; I just call it 'mixed-up'.

My Spanish is slowly improving as we continue to pass small villages where children's outstretched hands speak in the universal language of 'can I have a sweet'. I attempt to converse with anybody who will listen, but my most common phrase remains, 'No entiendo. Habla Ingles?' (I don't understand, do you speak English?) Whereafter I get a smile and shake of the head. My halting Spanish somehow merges with high school Italian and provides plenty of laughs for all involved.

Our daily routine of early rise and early camp allows me to explore



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Clockwise from left, a local Quechuan girl. A local arriero dances across Cacanapunta (4690 metres), the rust-stained Lake Pucachocha below. Trekkers negotiating the steep slopes of San Antonio Pass.

an old mine with Simon Yates one afternoon. There is not much to see, but our descent offers a magical moment as the snow begins to fall on our camp far below. By the time we reach the valley floor the snow flurry has cleared to yet another perfect sunset; we have been fortunate with the weather the entire trip.

The next day we get to the Siula Grande base camp, where *Touching The Void* played out. The valley track winds through grasslands and rocky terrain where condors, llamas, alpacas, vizcachas (giant rabbit-like rodents) and vicuñas (llama-like mammals) roam. While farming has driven the native fauna further into the ranges, we have been fortunate to glimpse many of the above on previous days, including being regularly escorted into camp under the watchful gaze and colossal wingspan of the Andean condor.

Climbing above base camp, condors again appear as we ascend to Cerro Bella Vista, the high point of our trip at 5200 metres. The small knoll on a scree-filled ridgeline offers incredible views of Siula Grande (6344 metres), Siula Chico (6265 metres) and the surrounding Alps.

Our trek will soon be coming to an end and we are fortunate the weather continues to hold, allowing for such incredible panoramas.

DAYS TEN AND 11: COMING HOME

Coming into Lake Jahuacocha campsite is like returning to 'the big smoke'. In a small hut, two elderly Peruvian ladies oversee the campsite and offer cold longnecks of Cerveza Cristal (Peru's finest ale) to exhausted trekkers. The Cerveza tastes better when you know it has been delivered by donkey from the nearest town, Llamac, a half day's trek away. We feast on roast lamb cooked in an earthen fire-pit accompanied by the local famed potatoes, one of Peru's 3000 varieties on offer.

Recharged and rebooted I accept that my re-immersion into civilisation is already beginning, feeling once again ready to tackle the world. I know the Huayhuash is changing and that soon the effects of tourism on the area will raise a number of questions that will

require well-considered answers. While visitors to the region nowadays will more likely find their tent surrounded by sheep or the occasional alpaca rather than gun-toting revolutionaries, there are newer emerging threats to consider, primarily encroaching foreign mining companies and, just as importantly, the matter of irresponsible trekkers negligently discarding waste.

But for now, this untouched remote alpine paradise remains just that, for how long I dare not guess. My hope is for a long time, because I know that sometime in the distant future I hope once again to risk frostbite and ice-cream headaches in the shadow of the grand summits of the Huayhuash. [W](#)

Walk at a Glance

Where: Cordillera Huayhuash, Peru

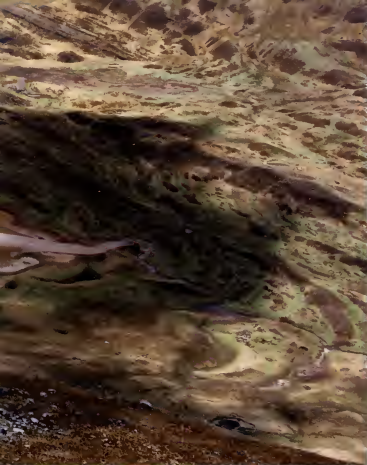
Gateway city: Hauraz (420 kilometres from Lima)

When: June to August

Weather: Temperatures vary from 25°C during the day to -10°C at night

Trekking: The walk can be done solo or as an unguided group, but food and maps are required. World Expeditions (worldexpeditions.com) run guided treks

Mark Watson is an Australian adventure photographer and journalist. He has travelled on assignment from Australia's outback to remote Bolivia and his work is published in adventure magazines worldwide. He is a Nikon Ambassador, member of Australian Commercial and Media Photographers (ACMP) and regular contributor to *Wild, Rock and Outer Edge*.



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ALONE *on* *the* FITZROY

The author in the midst of big water on the Fitzroy River. All photos by the author



Lachie Carracher makes the first solo descent of the Fitzroy River in the Kimberley

The blood-red sun fell rapidly from the vast open sky. I had spent most of the day thinking I wouldn't make it to Sir John Gorge, but thankfully extra water at the confluence of Hann and Fitzroy rivers accelerated the current, carrying me with it. Despite this assistance, I could hardly keep my boat straight due to extreme exhaustion. I lay as far back in my kayak as possible, my weak arms slapping the water with my paddle – I could have gotten more power out of teaspoons. I had made it to Sir John Gorge in the nick of time.

Sir John Gorge marks the start of the Fitzroy River. It had taken me three days to get here, culminating in the day's 11-hour paddle – without doubt one of the hardest of my life. As a general rule you can double the straight-line distance on a map to account for the twists and turns of a river – I had paddled 70 kilometres as the crow flies. That morning I had told myself, as I gripped my paddle with heavily blistered hands, 'Eighty kilometres Lachie, easy – you got this buddy.' In reality I knew I was going to face at least 100 kilometres of hard paddling. The tree-filled flood plains of the Kimberley are horrific. It's not just flat water, it is very technical flat water. Crocodiles inhabit the many channels and the countless spiders hanging from the tops of trees force you to zig-zag around the river like a fly caught in a balloon. But when the heavens align you can get a four-kilometer-long flat lagoon that makes it possible to paddle in a straight line.

Emerging from my boat I could barely walk. Cramped in the kayak my legs had stopped working at least six hours earlier. I dragged my heavily-loaded kayak as high up

the majestic sandstone gorge as my body would allow and then collapsed on a rock. The previous night I had seen that rain was on the way. The Fitzroy can easily triple in volume overnight with rain, thus it had been crucial for me to make it to the Sir John Gorge before it hit. I much preferred to be exhausted and tucked away safely above the river to waking up at 4am on a flood plain in rapidly rising water. Somehow I picked myself up off the rock and put up a tarp. I unrolled my sleeping pad and with no energy left, passed out cold.

In the middle of night I woke to heavy winds. I had had enough experience in the Kimberley during the wet season to know what this meant: thunderstorm! Jumping up to ensure the tarp was tied down tightly, I moved my kayak to within arm's reach and checked that my gear was safely packed away in dry bags inside. There was nothing left to do but sit it out. Crack! A bolt of lightning exploded no more than a 100 metres away and another in the other direction. The rain didn't just fall: it poured all night, leaving me wet and exhausted. I was on one of the most remote and heavily flooded rivers on earth – and I was alone.

The next morning I woke in a pool of water, a reminder of the previous night's thunderstorm. In my fatigue I hadn't searched very hard for a suitable camp, collapsing on a rock and calling it home for the night. Unfortunately, 'home' was a low spot in the rock slab, leaving my sleeping pad submerged in water.

Yesterday was already a blur of trees, lagoons and crocodiles. But I was feeling as alive as ever: my arms weighed like lead, my



hands stung to touch, but it was all okay because I was at the top of Sir John Gorge, which is unquestionably my favourite place in the world. Endless waterfalls cascaded for hundreds of feet into the swollen rust-coloured water of the river. These freshwater streams provided me with safe drinking water throughout my journey.

I sat quietly in the shade of an overhanging rock and watched rock wallabies casually jump around on the steep gorge walls, while crocodiles bathed in the sunlight on a riverside rock below. Being there alone was an amazing experience. Life continues as it did 40 000 years ago with next to no variation; the river spikes and falls throughout the seasons, the clouds roll over and eagles soar high in the sky. It's a quiet place, unchanged by time.

I wandered to a high vantage point over the river. This spot has great significance for the local Indigenous people, as there is a barramundi totem – a pile of rocks almost 40 metres tall. It's a very strange formation,

unlike anything else I have seen in the Kimberley. The local people say that the barramundi do not swim any higher than this spire.

I sensed the importance of this place. Awe-inspiring beauty and tranquility aside, I felt honoured to lay my eyes upon a gallery of paintings in the rock overhang. There are many different styles of art in the Kimberley, from ancient drawings to recent depictions of pearl diving operations out of Broome. There is also *Wandjina*, the spirits of clouds and rain, which are said to be around 4000-years-old. The *Wandjina* have eyes and a nose but no mouth, and it is reputed that if they had mouths then the rains would never stop. Fine by me, year-round extreme high water would be great. There was even older art, my favourite, the *Gwion Gwions* (Bradshaws). Long slender figures in *Gwion Gwion* paintings are depicted in ceremonial dress consisting of sashes, bangles and head dresses, images from a time when the first homosapiens crossed from Asia on to the Kimberley coast an estimated 25 000 to 35 000 years ago. Their

migration is said to have occurred when the ocean levels were lower and it was possible to walk from the Indonesian island group. Strangely the *Gwion Gwion* people left as quickly as they appeared. Evidence suggests this was due to the most recent ice age that would have created difficult environmental conditions.

Different styles of rock art in the Kimberley region depict these waves of migration brought about by variations in climate, food, environmental conditions and the nomadic habitation patterns of the very first Australians. They demonstrate population decline in the area and subsequent repopulation when conditions changed. I find it ironic that the Kimberley was the first to house the very first humans in Australia and yet now, due to its remoteness, it's one of the only spots in our country that has not had any mammal extinctions since European settlement.

I was now halfway through the expedition that had consumed my every thought for the last 14 months. I had considered every piece



'The golden rule of paddling is "never paddle alone". On the river when something goes down, good or bad, it is an integral part of paddling to have someone watch your back or 'high five' when things work out.'



*Lachie punching through a small drop on the Fitzroy. **Right**, self-portrait of the paddler as a young man; a ruddy-faced Carracher blends in with his surrounds.*

of the puzzle and every 'what if', continuously questioning my motivations and explaining my intended actions to family and friends. 'Why are you going alone,' they had asked. The golden rule of paddling is 'never paddle alone'. On the river when something goes down, good or bad, it is an integral part of paddling to have someone watch your back or 'high five' when things work out. This expedition wasn't about golden rules though; it was about what I was capable of achieving by myself after years of group expeditions of a similar nature. It was about silencing the voices in my head that had started as a whisper 14 months prior, growing to a scream that consumed my every waking thought. My girlfriend is a physiologist and her support with my preparation for the expedition had been invaluable. I would shut my eyes at night, and

thoughts of my solo descent of Australia's highest volume river would flood my brain, my heart going double time. I enjoyed it, but I couldn't sleep. 'Extreme anxiety', she told me, before pointing out that in young males the frontal lobe of the brain, which controls rationality and fear, has not yet fully developed, which is why young males do stupid things. Her comment backfired on her when I declared I better get this trip out of the way before it does develop.

The late Hendri Coetzee – an inspirational paddler with some of the biggest river descents to his name, including multiday solos in the Congo and Uganda, as well as the only source to sea of the world's longest river, the Nile, once wrote: 'It is hard to know the difference between irrational fear and instinct, but fortunate is he who can.' It was my instincts that insisted I fly out to one of the most remote, heavily flooded rivers in the world and paddle it by myself. Irrational fear was telling me I couldn't complete the puzzle, but my instincts knew better. Aspects of the undertaking were hard: the solitude

and the consequences of making a small mistake. From the moment I set out on the river, looking back to the Indigenous community of Mount Barnett, I understood that I had gotten myself into something big and I was the only one who could get myself out. Ahead of me was 400 kilometres of remote whitewater, crocodiles and everything else that leads to Fitzroy Crossing. I realised that I would be entirely dependant on my ability to deal with my surroundings and the obstacles I would encounter.

As I continued paddling down the river I found things very quiet. My sole companions were massive bulls that drank on the riverbanks. I noticed a lot about nature and my surroundings; any animal or swirl of the river was not only a companion but also a potential end to the expedition. With no real interaction with another person for days my senses were heightened and I felt deeply connected to the land. My mind wandered and it wandered far. In Indigenous culture it was traditional for adolescent males to go on 'walkabout', venturing into the wilderness

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for periods of up to six months. It was humbling to think about their adventures when I think that what I was doing was a 'large scale expedition'. Particularly when you consider all the things I needed to survive for up to two weeks alone in the wilderness: a stove, GPS, digital SLR camera, two lenses, batteries, tripod, two Go-Pros, tarp, sleeping mat, pillow, sleeping bag liner, bug net, fishing line, satellite phone

Below, one of Lachie's camps on the Fitzroy River.

and tracker, first aid kit, dehydrated food, protein powder, rescue gear, split paddle, knife, sunscreen, journals and a set of dry clothes – all of which were crammed into two dry bags in the back of my plastic Fluid Solo kayak. Although I am following a similar route to those Indigenous travellers my expedition was very different.

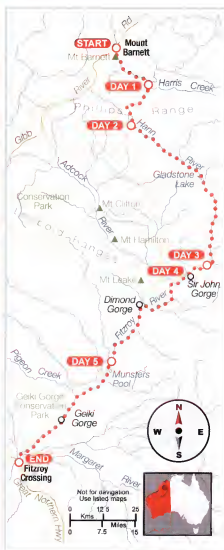
Motivated by the distance I was able to cover on the river the day before I push on, but I wonder how hard should I push? With no one to answer to and fatigue in full effect, I am constantly worried about

giving myself heat exhaustion.

Sir John Gorge has some of the best big water rapids in Australia. I take my time to paddle each rapid safely and by the end of the day I am on the other side of this massive white water hurdle. Now I only had one last hurdle before the mission was done: 160 kilometres of flat water to Fitzroy Crossing. The trip had taken on a different flavour; I felt that I had made a journey to my special place. That night I found a nice rock overhang that provided me with enough shelter for a great night's sleep.



'The Kimberley has a funny way with missions in her backyard, if you sleep the whole journey in high gorges, you can bet that somehow you will spend your last night in the mud.'



The sun broke on a new day, waking me early. I planned to push 40 kilometres to Dimond Gorge, then 80 kilometres the following day to Geikie Gorge, it was then only another 20 kilometres further before I would be back in civilisation.

With a smile on my face I blitzed to Dimond Gorge by lunch. With food in my stomach and the clock just ticking past 12pm I decided to push on, aiming for a new target: the King Leopold Range between Dimond and Geikie gorges. I planned to get to high ground, find shelter and make it out a day earlier than originally intended.

Once again I made camp in the nick of time. The campsite was not ideal; it was a small bit of rock in the middle of a flood plain, plagued by bugs. I was exhausted and during the night was woken a number of times by a family of freshwater crocs no more than ten metres away from my camp. They barked, splashed and carried on all night.

The Kimberley has a funny way with missions in her backyard, if you sleep the whole journey in high gorges, you can bet that somehow you will spend your last night in the mud. On an expedition the previous year it didn't rain for a month, but the night before we paddled out it poured. Expeditions to the area have a different style and flavour to anything else I have ever experienced.

The next morning I woke early to a dingy trying to get into my rubbish bag. I scared it off. I was ready for a massive day on the river and launched off, determined not to look at my GPS for three hours. The river grew all day, until I found myself in the middle of red-coloured torrent that was bigger than anything I had ever paddled anywhere else in the world.

After a long but fulfilling day on flat water I found myself 400 kilometres and five nights downstream from the start of my adventure at Fitzroy Crossing. There was no fanfare, no party, just a steep hill and a bus to wait for. It was over, I had made it.

I am told by the locals that if you drink the water of the Fitzroy you will be back every year. Let me tell you that after 100 kilometres of flat water paddling in a day, I was filling my helmet with the silty red waters of the Fitzroy and gulping down every drop. As a consequence I now have an abundance of the Kimberley's silt-filled waters coursing through my veins, and I am truly in love and addicted to one of the world's most breathtaking wonders. **W**

Growing up in country Victoria, the 22-year-old Lachie Carracher spends his life following rivers of the world with a camera and kayak hoping to share, explore and protect. Check out more about Lachie at follow-the-river.com

Kimberley Threats: what does the future hold?

The Kimberley is full of free-flowing wild rivers like the Fitzroy. There are even pockets of ancient rainforest that still remain tucked away and preserved. The Kimberley holds part of the last four per cent of healthy coastlines in the world, and these coastlines are home to the calving grounds for the world's largest population of humpback whales.

When I am on the river I feel like I have stepped back in time. From the put-in to the take-out there are few signs of other humans, while the landscape bursts with wildlife. Sadly, adventure seekers are not the only people looking to the Kimberley. Every year more and more mining corporations are lining up to develop the region and industrialise it in a 21st century gold rush. Currently, the oil and gas industries are conducting deep sea drilling off the Kimberley coast. We have seen what can happen with the Montara oil spill, not to mention the Gulf of Mexico. Now they want to build a massive gas refinery and industrial port that will be built at James Price Point, just north of Broome – bringing shipping tankers through the middle of whale nurseries. There are proposals to build a deepwater port at Point Torment in King George Sound, north of Derby, to export coal to India and China. Copper, uranium and bauxite mining companies are also lining up to use these port facilities and strip the landscape of the habitat it provides for threatened species. We've made big mistakes in Australia and across the world, with native animal populations facing extinction or declining numbers, but we're lucky

because we still have this iconic, amazing, rich part of our country intact – and we need to protect it.

There is a long list of companies that want to destroy this amazing part of the world. Oil and gas companies Woodside, Shell, Chevron, BHP Billiton and BP together, want to build one of the largest oil and gas refineries in the world on part of the Kimberley coastline that the Western Australian government forcibly acquired from local Indigenous people. Then there are coal companies like Rey Resources that want to dig up the Fitzroy Valley within the next 12 months with no relevant environmental studies done on the effects on the Fitzroy catchment. Alcoa and Rio Tinto want to strip-mine the Mitchell Plateau for bauxite, a mineral resource that is vital to feed the freshwater streams and billabongs year-round. Bauxite acts like a sponge that sucks up water in the wet season and slowly releases it throughout the year, an invaluable asset to the healthy ecology of the Kimberley region. The only way that these developments will be stopped from going ahead is by getting involved.

This year the Western Australian and Commonwealth governments will be making some incredibly important decisions that will decide the fate of the Kimberley and it's important that people all across Australia make their views known. Be part of a fast growing campaign to protect the Kimberley – go to local events, contact your politicians tell your friends and visit wilderness.org.au/kimberley



A jubilant Lachie at Fitzroy Crossing, the end-point of his epic solo paddle.



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Icy Delights

Graham Wootton captures a Tasmanian winter



Looking down to Lake Seal, Mt Field National Park.







Clockwise from above, a dolomite tor on Mt Wellington silhouetted against a winter sunrise. Icicles formed from waterfall spray, Mt Wellington. Johnston Tarn, Tarn Shelf, Mt Field National Park. Ice formations on a small pool, Mt Wellington.

Gubom Wootton grew up in the Blue Mountains and moved to Hobart in 1971. He has had a lifelong interest in bushwalking and associated activities including cross-country skiing, mountain biking and wilderness photography. He is particularly attracted by the photographic opportunities that winter provides. He now enjoys the flexibility that retirement brings to take every opportunity to be there when the snow conditions and the light are just right.

The Main Range Way

Bruce and Alistair Paton find that best laid plans can go astray as they explore New South Wales' Main Range

Mist-shrouded peaks stretching to the horizon, fields covered in summer wildflowers, remote trackless ridges and bubbling streams flowing beside remote campsites – all these things seemed a very long way away on a rainy late-November evening in inner-city Melbourne. Still, the potential for adventure loomed large in our minds as we laid out our maps in a crowded apartment and made plans for a bushwalk across Australia's most iconic alpine landscape, the Main Range of Kosciuszko National Park.

Planning for a big walk always generates excitement, but in this case the feeling was particularly strong because the walk in question had been on our agenda for several years, ever since we had done the classic two-day circuit of the Main Range and speculated about what it would be like to leave the beaten track and explore untracked country nearby. In that time we had put together a comprehensive plan of what we intended to do. Starting at the small alpine resort of Guthega we would follow a mix of rough tracks and ridges to the main roadhead at Charlotte Pass, camp among the granite boulders of the Rams Head Range and then spend two full days exploring Mt Kosciuszko and the surrounding peaks. Once we had our fill of the better-known sections of the park

we would strike out north, following ridges above the treeline as far as we could before one last night of camping in the wilderness and the descent to our waiting car.

It all sounded almost too good to be true, and in a way it was. The walk we ended up completing bore only a passing resemblance to the one we had laid out so carefully, but in a funny way that encapsulated exactly what

made this walk – and bushwalking in general – so great. The real world is never quite as you imagine it, no matter how much you prepare. If that means you dump some of your previous plans it's a sacrifice well worth making for the thrill of discovering new landscapes, new campsites and, in the end, what we would happily call one of the best five-day bushwalks in Australia.

DAY ONE

*Planned campsite: Ramshead Range
Actual campsite: ridge above Blue Lake*

After so many months of planning it was a thrill to wake up in Jindabyne knowing that we were actually about to begin the walk. Our packs seemed a tad heavy once five days' food was loaded into them, and we got off to a later start than we intended – largely due to a late breakfast – but despite these minor concerns we were buoyed to finally be out in the wilderness, a feeling reinforced by our chat with day walkers who expressed amazement at our willingness to carry such gigantic packs and walk so far for so long (always a welcome self-esteem boost). With the sun shining, wildflowers in full flower and a few snow drifts still visible in the shadows of the higher peaks, walking doesn't get much better.

We made good progress following a rough



Clockwise from above, snow daisies below Little Twynham. Morning cloud and snow daisies below Mt Townsend. Walking through Twynam Saddle. All photos by the authors



track beside the Snowy River to Illawong Lodge, before crossing the Snowy on a swing bridge that allowed us to indulge in some *Indiana Jones* fantasies. This is where the marked track ended and the real off-track walking began, with an ascent to a saddle between Mt Twynam (2196 metres) and neighbouring Little Twynam. In between the peaks were some delightful alpine grasslands, an increasing number of boulders, a few defiant stands of snow gums and an ascent of 300 metres in about three kilometres.

The walking was excellent but increasingly taxing, and we felt the full weight of those five days' worth of supplies as we climbed the ridge, keeping north of Twynam Creek. Fortunately route-finding was not difficult. The saddle was a nice reward, opening up before us like a gateway to the Main Range and revealing most of Australia's 2000-metre peaks, topped by Mt Kosciuszko rising in the distance.

The plan from here was to descend 300 metres to Blue Lake, then connect with the Main Range Track, which we would follow to Charlotte Pass. From there we would take the Summit Road towards Mt Kosciuszko and camp on the slopes of the Rams Head Range. Our sneaking suspicion that this was not a realistic option became more apparent as we carefully picked a path between boulders on the western side of Crummer Spur; we had travelled less than four kilometres since crossing the Snowy River and it was already late in the afternoon. By the time we were halfway down the slope, we confronted for the first time on the trip (but not the last) the

fact that what we imagined while excitedly spreading out maps on the kitchen table in Melbourne did not quite match reality.

The view before us gave us an excellent opportunity to pick out a good impromptu campsite. We figured that our agenda for day two wasn't overly taxing and that we could handle the additional distance, so we settled on a spot on the other side of Blue Lake. Clambering up from the lake reinforced that we had made the right call; we somehow missed the track that had looked so obvious from above, and a struggle through low scrub drained us of our last remaining energy.

We were pleased with our ability to find an alternative campsite based on the situation on the ground, but we still felt the plan had been sound and it was only the late start that had beaten us. We wouldn't let that happen again!

DAY TWO

Planned campsite: Mt Townsend

Actual campsite: Wilkinsons Creek

In stark contrast to the previous day, we were walking by 8am. There were plenty of contrasts with day one – the sun generally stayed away, walking was on formed tracks and notions of being far from civilisation were challenged by day walkers, families and sightseers. On the plus side, the walking was quick and easy: A short distance from the campsite we reached the Main Range circuit and began to retreat the tracks we had made a decade earlier on a footpath that descended to the Snowy River, followed by a river crossing on stepping stones and a short but very sharp climb to Charlotte Pass, the

starting point for many Main Range adventures and, on this day at least, the finishing line for some kind of large-scale cycling event.

After a short break we joined the day walkers heading along the Summit Walk in the direction of Mt Kosciuszko. Prior to 1976 this was the Summit Road and it still feels like one. It did help us cover ground immeasurably faster than the previous day though, and following a break at Seamans Hut near our planned campsite from the night before – where we enjoyed a cup of hot soup and a quick read of the log book (favourite entry: 'your mountain is adequate' signed 'visitors from the future') – we arrived at the space-age toilet facilities at Rawson Pass. This is where the path from the top of the Thredbo chairlift joins the Main Range Track for the final ascent of Mt Kosciuszko.

The summit of Australia's highest peak is far from imposing, but you can't walk right past it and not visit the top. The views are good, if not arresting, and after taking our turn to be photographed next to the summit cairn we were happy to get back to the turn-off and become bushwalkers again.

It was now late in the afternoon and decision time again. We had picked out a promising saddle between Mt Townsend, about five kilometres past Mt Kosciuszko, and the neighbouring Abbott Peak, but a quick look from the summit of Kozzie put paid to those plans. The nice, flat campsite on the map was revealed to be based on contour lines 20 metres apart, which still allowed for a tent 19 metres higher at one end than the



Clockwise from above, Bruce Paton working out 'Where next?' The campsite near Blue Lake. Alistair Paton on the ridge above the Sentinel.



other, not to mention the rocks that would clearly pose another challenge to a comfortable night's sleep. In the end the weather made the decision for us; a tent high on Australia's second-highest mountain isn't the best place to sit out a lightning storm.

As it happened the gathering thunderstorms never eventuated, but a serious bank of fog did, which would have made climbing the peak extremely challenging. Fortunately our planning hadn't all been for nothing – unlike day one, we had a Plan B. This was to camp off the track below Muellers Pass near Wilkinsons Creek, and we found a perfect spot perched on a natural ledge above the creek. As the weather closed in we retreated into the tent, emerging only to produce a passable spaghetti bolognese and a less passable attempt at caramelised bananas.

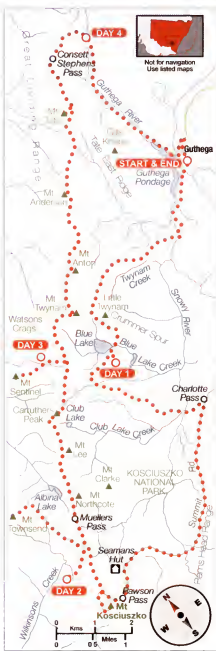
DAY THREE

Intended campsite: the Sentinel

Actual campsite: a saddle above the Sentinel

It's funny how a new day can change your perspective – in this case, the perspective was from back on top of the ridge peering over valleys full of mist, with the morning sun catching the highest peaks poking above the clouds.

Our first task for the day was a side trip without packs to the top of Mt Townsend, which proved to be much more impressive than the slightly higher Mt Kosciuszko. An additional bonus was our discovery of flat grassy clearings just below the summit that would make an excellent campsite in the right weather conditions.



Back at our packs we rejoined the Main Range Track on its most spectacular section. The path hugs a ridgeline on a narrow ledge as it winds above the picturesque Lake Albina, then follows a windswept ridge past the top of jagged cliffs to the summit of Carruthers Peak.

This also served as the departure point from our walk of several years before. On the far side of the mountain we passed the track back to Charlotte Pass and continued on the ridge along a rough four-wheel drive track in the direction of Mt Twynan, passing the jagged ridges of the Sentinel and Watsons Crags.

Our original plan had been to find a campsite on the main ridge, but after a chat with a ranger in Jindabyne, who told us it was possible to pitch a tent on the narrow ridge of the Sentinel, we had changed our minds. The prospect of waking up on a ridge that juts out from the main body of the Main Range with the cliffs of Watsons Crags to the north and the rugged slopes of 'Little Austria' to the south was too tempting. As we left the track and headed towards the ridge we began to see that what appeared from a distance to be a steep but gently undulating ridge was in fact a jagged spine of rock with a ribbon of dust – a narrow walking track – somehow finding a path to the exposed summit which sits atop 400 metre cliffs. The views were spectacular, but the thought of taking on the ridge with heavy legs and a heavier pack, had us again revising our plans. Or, in this case, going back to Plan A. Just at the point where the ridge left the Main Range there were some lovely flat snow grass plains, which meant we could take a short walk to the best sunset views while still experiencing great camping conditions.

There was time to pitch a tent and cook dinner before taking cameras and tripods on

to the ridge. Fading light beat hopes of reaching the summit, but from halfway up the views were unforgettable as the sun set on the cliffs of the Sentinel and Watsons Crags. Conditions were perfectly calm. If ever there was a night you could survive in a tent perched somewhere on the ridge, that would have been it.

A bonus for the night was the chorus of alpine frogs that serenaded us to sleep from the creek below.

DAY FOUR

Planned campsite: Rolling Ground

Actual campsite: Consett Stephens Pass

Awaking to a perfectly clear morning there was some regret we hadn't tried carrying a tent out on to the ridge. But eating breakfast on top of Mt Twynam erased any second thoughts. The top of Australia's third-highest peak provided 360° views of the whole Main Range – and our entire walk. The perfection was only interrupted by a near disaster when a pack toppled on top of a stove that was in the process of brewing a cup of tea. A prong of the still-burning stove somehow became wedged in a zip, but a quick-thinking Bruce arrived in time to switch off the gas before any damage was done.

From Mt Twynam we wouldn't step on a formed track until we reached Guthega the next day. With no marked track we had to pick a path around, over and between a handful of mostly unnamed peaks to reach the top of Mt Tate.

Again, the off-track walking took a lot longer than it looked like it should on the map, and finding a route was harder than on the first day. We took a long break just below the summit of Mt Tate and briefly considered setting up camp – the summit would have offered dramatic views at sunset – but we didn't feel as though we had earned it after just a few hours' walking.

Our aim in any case had always been to camp on the Rolling Ground, a wide

undulating plateau about five kilometres to the north, via Consett Stephens Pass.

So we pushed on, finding (and losing more than once) a rough track that descended to the pass, before slogging our way up the ridge opposite, which revealed itself to be a wild landscape of boulders, snow grass and fantastic views. This all seemed remarkably similar to the descriptions we had read of the Rolling Ground and we were pretty ready to dump our packs, as we figured that after missing each planned campsite of the walk so far, why spoil a perfect decision?

In this case, our decision also gelled with our longer-term plans. With our exit

'We made good progress following a rough track beside the Snowy River to Illawong Lodge, before crossing the Snowy on a swing bridge that allowed us to indulge in some Indiana Jones fantasies.'

scheduled for the next day and after taking almost ten hours to drive up to start the walk, we didn't want to travel any further than was strictly necessary before reaching the car. It also helped that the ground south of the pass was spectacular, with open campsites with clear views of wild mountains in every direction. And a short excursion to the Rolling Ground (minus packs) meant we wouldn't miss anything by changing plans yet again.

After what had become a hazy afternoon the weather gods smiled on us again, the sun emerging from behind clouds just before sunset, prompting a mad scramble for cameras and tripods.

DAY FIVE

Planned destination: home

Actual destination: home

Another perfect sunrise greeted our final morning on the track and we soaked up enough mountain magic to nourish us until our next big bushwalk. Of course, this one wasn't over yet, and we still needed to get back to the car. We had two options: follow the ridge for about three kilometres before choosing a point to plunge off the end towards Guthega Pondage, or take an easier route down near camp and follow the river out.

Back on the morning of day one the ranger had advised us to follow the ridge, but we had a good view of the river and it didn't look too hard. We could rock-hop or walk along the flat ground next to the river bank, with the waterway providing a highway out of the ranges. And besides, this was the same ranger who suggested camping on the Sentinel. Who knows how long it had been since his last backcountry trip; we had been here five days and knew this place.

The route down to the river from the campsite proved to be as easy as expected and we began talking of an early lunch in Jindabyne, at which point we learnt the final lesson of the trip: hubris. Maps and even rangers had proven fallible so we decided to ignore them altogether. Dumb move.

What we had imagined as a delightful stroll along a riverbank was in fact a maddening fight with sharp, twisted undergrowth and shin-deep sections of swamp. We had to fight our way through prickly bushes across unseen gullies and cling to shaky branches to negotiate 45° slopes. We should have followed the ridge.

Fortunately, all good (and some not-so-good) things come to an end, and we finally reached the shores of Lake Jindabyne and shortly after, the car we had left behind five days earlier.

The walk had not followed the tight script we had planned, with many factors – some under our control, some not – forcing changes along the way. But it also served to prove that sometimes it's not always bad when best laid plans go astray. We're already drawing up plans for our next trip – from the comfort of suburban homes and office buildings. But the bush itself will have the final say. And that's the way it should be. **W**



Bruce and Alistair Paton are twin brothers who escape from office jobs in Melbourne whenever possible to go and enjoy their passion for bushwalking and photography in Australia's wild places. You can find their images at wildsight.com.au

An Introduction to Bushwalking Food

Andrew Davison outlines some of the basics of lightweight food for bushwalking in the second of his series of articles

It was on my first extended bushwalk along the Wilderness Coast between Mallacoota and Ben Boyd National Park that I quickly began to understand that the food I was carrying – noodles, biscuits, peanut butter and fruitcake – was infinitely bland. Sitting alone on a wilderness beach I thought to myself that if the dozen red-bellied black snakes I had encountered weren't going to kill me, eight days of this diet would. Worst of all, I should have known better – I was a third year apprentice chef! I knew I needed to put more thought into this in the future.

I quickly learnt there were a few things to be taken into consideration on extended walks. Of course, one of the most important factors is for the meal to be compact and lightweight (preferably not exceeding 900 grams of food per person per day), and it also should adequately satisfy your hunger. On most occasions, the meal should be simple and easy to prepare, with minimal utensils and only one stove. But, most importantly, your choice must be something you enjoy eating.

FRESH FOOD

Initially I didn't think fresh vegetables would be viable for extended bushwalking. However, I have found that there are many vegetables that are light and keep well. For instance, a fresh carrot a week into a walk is a great way of perking up a meal at little or no inconvenience. A bunch of spring onions can be chopped up in the field and added to almost any dish, while a handful of crisp snow peas can make a big difference to a laksa curry.

How long fresh foods will last depends largely on what they are and how they are carried and stored in the field. Carefully handled fresh herbs can last four or five days or longer, and can transform a bland bush meal into a sensation. Fresh chillies are a brilliant way to spice up a meal, while ginger can add a kick to your menu. Both will last weeks.

Cheese will usually keep for weeks, although the flavour will slowly grow stronger and it will become slimy with oil. Hard cheeses are more suited for the bush; try a block of parmesan or treat yourself to a block of Comté.

The following dish is long-lasting, serves two people and including rice weighs only 380 grams (less than 200 grams per person).

SPICED CARROTS AND PEAS

Serves: two

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon garam masala
- 1 small onion
- 1 garlic clove
- 2.5 centimetres of ginger
- 1 large carrot
- 3 dessert spoons of oil
- 1/4 cup dried peas
- salt
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar

At home

Pack cumin seeds, cumin, coriander, and garam masala together

In the field

Chop onion, garlic and ginger finely, dice the carrot. Heat oil, add onion, garlic, ginger, cumin seeds, cumin, coriander and the garam masala and stir for two minutes. Now add carrots and stir fry for a few minutes. Add 1/2 cup of water and the peas. Cover and leave to simmer until the peas are rehydrated. Season with salt, pepper and sugar. Serve with rice.

PICKLES, RELISHES, CHUTNEY AND OTHER PRESERVES

Due to their high moisture content and thus heavy weight, the use of these condiments is somewhat limited. However, preserves are so rich in flavour that only a small amount is needed. A small container of preserves can be used in many different ways. Jams and sweet chutneys can be spread on pancakes for



Spiced carrots and peas. Andrew Davison



Tamarind mushrooms and shrimps. *Davidson*

In the field

Place the bulgur into a bowl with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water and let it soak until the bulgur softens (hot water speeds the process). Slice the fig paste into small cubes, chop the parsley and mint. Add all ingredients with the soaked and softened bulgur. Stir through and serve.

DRIED FOODS

Dried foods often weigh less than a quarter of their original weight and in many cases the volume is reduced equally, making it the best food to carry. Supermarkets are loaded with different dried foods from pasta and legumes to mushrooms and milk. And if you venture into your Asian food or health food stores the selection becomes greater, offering dried seafood, a variety of soya products and a greater assortment of vegetables.

TAMARIND MUSHROOMS AND SHRIMPS

Serves: two
Tamarind has a great sour tangy flavour and only a little is needed, making it ideal for lightweight bushwalking meals. It can be found in any Asian foodstore.

Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of dried Chinese shiitake mushrooms (cut into bite-sized pieces)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of dried green beans
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of dried shrimps

- 2 dried red chillies
- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- 1 teaspoon vegetable stock
- 3 dessert spoons of dried onion
- 1 teaspoon of dried garlic
- 4 spring onions chopped into one centimetre lengths (optional)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon tamarind paste
- 1 dessert spoon fish sauce

At home

Pack mushrooms, beans, shrimps, red chillies, sugar, vegetable stock, onion and garlic together. Pack tamarind paste and fish sauce into a small container together.

In the field

Place one cup of water with the tamarind paste and fish sauce into a pot and bring to the boil. Now add all other ingredients and cook until the vegetables are rehydrated (add more water if necessary) and a thick gravy has formed. If using spring onions add them a few minutes before the vegetables are fully rehydrated. Serve over rice.

breakfast. Relish can be served with a slice of salami on a cracker for lunch, or a pickle can be used to accompany the evening curry.

The following recipe is a great use of different preserves. It is a mix of pungent sweet and sour flavours of preserved figs and lemons.

PRESERVED LEMON AND FIG TABOULI

Serves: two

Preserved lemons can be found at most delis or speciality food shops. You can replace the fresh parsley and mint with dried; if so add it to the bulgur when it is soaking.

Ingredients

- $\frac{3}{4}$ of a preserved lemon
- 3 or 4 dried figs
- 100gms of fig paste
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of bulgur
- 1 small bunch of parsley
- 1 small bunch of mint
- Juice of half a lemon
- 5 dessert spoons of olive oil
- salt and pepper

At home

Remove the pulp from the lemons, rinse under cold water and slice into thin strips. Chop the figs into small pieces.

Andrew Davidson takes pleasure in the simplicity of being in the bush. He currently resides in Mongolia and thinks himself fortunate to live in a place with an abundance of untouched walking destinations.

Going Solo

Bron Willis examines the risks and rewards of solitude in the wilderness

On a wintery Saturday in late August 2009, Tim Holding set off along Victoria's popular Razorback ridge, bound for 'the queen of the Victorian Alps', Mt Feathertop. With his pack full of supplies for a weekend in the mountains, he sought what many bushwalkers seek when they step on to the track: the relief that wilderness brings to a busy city mind, peace and quiet and the beauty of the Australian bush.

In the days and weeks to come, after Holding failed to return home and search-and-rescue teams scoured the area surrounding Mt Feathertop, the details of Holding's walk were pored over in detail by the public.

Fellow bushwalkers, politicians and members of the general public all had an opinion about the decisions that led him to be alone, lost, cold and waiting for rescue in the gullies below Feathertop's summit. Among the main questions Holding fielded after rescuers pulled him to safety three days later, one was particularly persistent: why did he decide to walk solo?

On talk shows and in online forums around Victoria, the public questioned his credentials to be walking alone. 'If he is so experienced in the bush what was he doing there by himself at this time of year?' asked one guest on radio station 3AW's blog. 'On the Herald Sun site, "By law they should be made to walk in twos."

Holding defends his right to walk alone and rebuts the suggestion from some that solo walking is a dangerous activity: 'I think they're totally wrong. The question is not whether you're alone, but whether you're well prepared... Have you done everything you can to mitigate the risk of anything happening?'

Although arguably the most high profile bushwalker of late to find his decisions being scrutinised by the public, Holding is not the first adventurer to attract criticism for venturing into the wilderness alone: paddler Lachie Carracher (see his story this issue) recently found himself under fire for what some fellow kayakers considered an unacceptable risk by paddling solo down the Fitzroy River in Western Australia's remote Kimberley region.

So, in the face of all this criticism, what is the attraction of going solo? Martin Hawes, a bushwalker and wilderness photographer has

spent countless nights alone in the wilderness. Between 1977 and 1995 Hawes spent between 50 and 100 days a year solo, often spending two weeks camped out in one spot in patient vigil, waiting for the perfect photographic convergence of weather and light.

But what began as a practical solution for Hawes soon became a philosophical journey. 'I just love solo walking... It is the *crème de la crème* of the wilderness experience,' he says. 'It's just total immersion in wilderness. It is the greatest experience, the greatest thrill, to be in the beating heart of an immense tract of wilderness, moving among nature, alone. Being alone in that kind of place heightens your awareness – you just have to respond.'

Hawes also argues that being alone in the wilderness removes the dishonesty that he considers part of the social walking experience. 'When you're alone in the bush, all forms of dishonesty and bravado fall away... As a youngster in the 1970s, my bravado told me I could do anything – I was ambitious. The main buffer against wilderness was youth, and a deluded sense of immortality. But after a while you realise there's no point in fooling yourself and you realise bravado is meaningless: the mountains don't give a hoot what you do – they're not impressed.'

Michelle Kohout, a botanist from Melbourne's northeastern suburbs has been walking solo since she was in her early twenties. 'I often went camping with my dad when I was little and he instilled a love of nature and walking ethics in me. I was an only child and always had to amuse myself, so being alone and walking just went hand in hand. I started doing day walks by myself and soon I did my first overnight trip by myself at the Prom.'

Although Kohout also enjoys walking with others, solo walking has a strong appeal in itself. 'I quite like the solitude. I like being able to make my own decisions and not having to worry about what anyone else thinks or wants to do. For me, being in the outdoors feeds the soul, so doing it alone just allows me to enjoy the feeling of joy that nature gives you even more. Some people get energy from crowds and the city, but I find that tires me. Nature invigorates

me. Often I walk to get away from people, probably.'

Holding himself cites similar reasons for seeking solitude in the bush. 'Sometimes you need to be out in the wilderness by yourself, without any reference or reminders of the pace of your professional life, to enjoy nature and to walk at your own pace and go wherever you want.'

For Holding, Kohout and Hawes, solitude is a great attraction, but all three have at times experienced a lack of understanding from others. 'Lots of people don't understand it,' says Kohout, opening the lid on what is perhaps a general mistrust of time spent alone in a society that thrives on constant socialising and endless opportunities to 'connect' with fellow human beings.

Although he also goes walking with others, Holding sometimes walks alone as a means of escaping this constant contact. 'Solitude is undervalued in our society. Now more than ever before, we have a need to allow ourselves time to reflect. We are bombarded, we have so many ways to connect: mobiles, computers, Twitter, Facebook...'

Perhaps our technological age, in which every opportunity to interact with others is valued as a commercial opportunity, has engendered a mistrust or even fear of solitude. As Hawes points out, 'A lot of people are never alone. It's something I think most people would benefit from. It's about knowing who you are and understanding yourself. From the word go we're told a story of who we are, in relation to everyone else, none of which is necessarily true. You're not actually seeing the truth of who you are. Solitude breaks that mould.'

Hawes considers solitude and the natural world as a powerful combination. 'Put those two things together and what you'll get is a beautiful experience.' And he is not alone. One voice which came to Holding's defence during his disappearance was Andrew Ramsay, an adventure specialist reported in the *Age* on 31 August 2009 as saying 'The inducement to go out there with the solitude of your own company and the quietness, the stillness – it's just, it's a drug, it's just fantastic... It's really spiritual. It's communing with nature in a way, well to me, it's like no other.' 'I know exactly why he would have done it...' said Ramsey. 'He's got

Photographer Michael Walters enjoying some time alone on Tarn Shelf, Mt Field National Park. Michael Walters



big responsibilities on his shoulders.'

But there are some who consider solitude and the outdoors a dangerous marriage rather than a match made in heaven. Bushwalking Victoria's Walksafe policy recommends walking in groups of no less than four. After Holding's ordeal, the club's President David Reid told the *Age* the ordeal demonstrated the dangers of bushwalking alone. 'You should not go off by yourself in that part of the world and our policy is to say there should be a minimum of four people on any expedition so if someone does get injured, there are people there for support and to get assistance.'

Frank Zgoznik is Convenor for Bush Search and Rescue Victoria (BSAR), a volunteer organisation which assists Police Search and Rescue to locate and rescue people who have gone missing in bush or alpine areas. During his 26 years as a member of BSAR, Zgoznik has observed a shift in the trend of walking in larger groups. 'In the 1970s you would have had big parties going out, in the 1980s it would have been eight to ten people, and then in the 1990s and even in the last few years it's gone down to twos and ones. I think we just need to accept we're more likely to have more solo people doing things outdoors, or doing things in pairs.'

'[The policy of walking in groups of four] doesn't go down well with a lot of people at Bush Search and Rescue,' says Zgoznik, hastening to add that although he doesn't often walk solo, he has just returned from five days of solo walking in the Razor Viking area in the Victorian Alps, which takes in some of the most remote and rugged reaches

of Victorian wilderness. Looking at the list of people rescued by BSAR since its inception in 1949, Zgoznik is not prepared to analyse the statistics of solo walkers versus those in a group. 'I would say that if you're by yourself you are putting yourself in a riskier position, but we don't have the stats to back that up.' Equally important to the size of a bushwalking party, said Zgoznik, is the importance of having 'good gear and [having] your wits about you and the right experience... [those factors] all contribute to the safety of walking.'

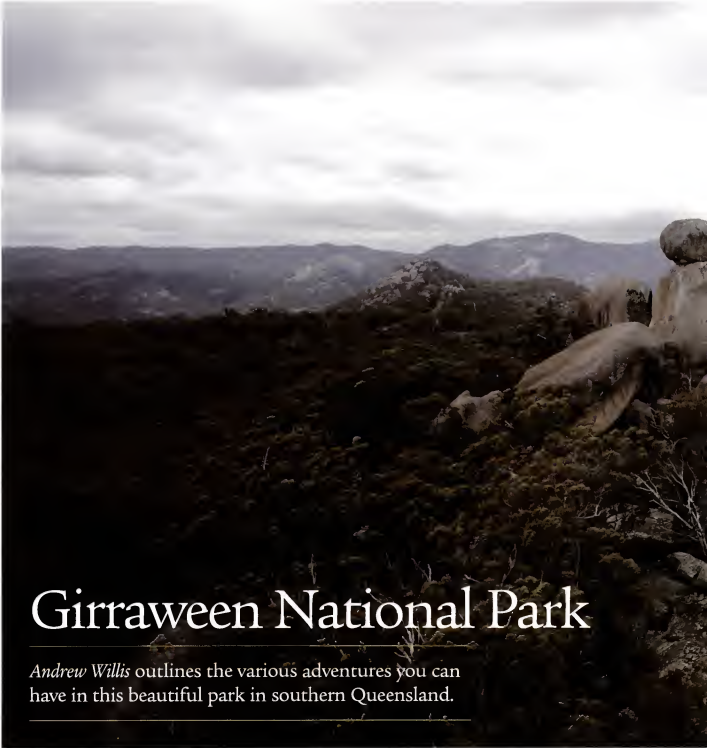
Zgoznik was one of 25 BSAR members deployed at Mt Feathertop in the search for Minister Holding in 2009. Such was public debate after the search, says Zgoznik, that the organisation considered developing a policy encouraging people not to go solo walking. 'We decided against it,' he says. 'We didn't feel it was necessary to have a policy on that sort of thing. We'll just go out and look for whoever needs it. It's not up to us to judge what they did or anything like that.'

Another criticism that Holding faced over and over again after Feathertop was his lack of an EPIRB or emergency beacon. But are emergency beacons an automatic tick in the box for safety when walking alone? Not according to Zgoznik. 'You wouldn't find a consensus among BSAR searchers that people need to carry EPIRBs. It's more important to have good navigation skills and a map. A lot of people at BSAR are more for having your wits about you, and having good thinking skills than relying on technology.'

Hawes changed his mind about beacons and purchased one in 1986 after being tent-bound in Tasmania's Eldon Ranges for 12 days in a blizzard. Part of his decision was in consideration for the people that love him, he says. But neither emergency beacons nor walking in groups necessarily guarantees safety. 'You can be highly responsible as a solo walker,' says Hawes. 'There is a fine line between adventure and recklessness. Part of your job is to stay on the right side of that line.'

Whatever the public think, walkers will continue to seek solitude in the bush. Michelle Kohout vigorously defends her right to do so. 'If you take the right precautions, you can be responsible as a solo walker, just like you can in a group. We have a right to recreate however we like. We're lucky in this country that we can do that.' These words are reminiscent of those that Holding used in his press conference on 2 September 2009, the day after his rescue. 'I think it would be very disappointing if the message that goes forward from this is that you shouldn't hike alone... We live in an age where it's good to get away, and clear your head, and just be alone. That's the beauty of this part of the world. You can be there and not have a care in the world and not carry whatever baggage you've got with you from Melbourne. That's what I wanted to do that afternoon and that's where I wanted to be.'

Bron Willis is a Melbourne writer, editor and bushwalker.



Girraween National Park

Andrew Willis outlines the various adventures you can have in this beautiful park in southern Queensland.

Home to cascading mountains of granite, underground streams, mysterious caves and some seriously scary rockclimbing, Girraween National Park stands proud in the region known as the Granite Belt. Hugging the Queensland side of the Queensland – New South Wales border, this granite-strewn national park is ripe for the picking if you are searching for adventure. It offers near endless opportunities for exploration and play among the myriad of boulders, often piled high and appearing to defy gravity. On, within and around the roughly

textured stone a diverse and dramatic landscape awaits walkers as they cast a wide eye over the chaotic beauty surrounding them.

HISTORY

The first European to enter the area later known as Girraween National Park was explorer and botanist Allan Cunningham in 1827, but due to the relative harshness of the landscape no one attempted to settle there until 1843. Sheep stations, dairies and fruit and vegetable farms eventually dotted the landscape as various periods of

settlement brought families to the area keen to try and tame the rugged granite wilderness.

During the 1920s Dr Spencer Roberts, who was the local general practitioner from Stanthorpe, began visiting the area. He soon became concerned with the welfare of the superb lyrebird and the common wombat and started lobbying the government to protect the area. His work paid off when in 1930 the Department of Forestry started acquiring land for national parks. In 1966 Girraween National Park was formed and the land it protects now spans 11 800 hectares.



Left, looking north to the Sphinx from Turtle Rock. All photos by the author

The area has a rich Indigenous history but sadly the stories and the names they gave to places have been lost. Evidence of their existence comes in the form of artefacts left behind. Marked trees, tools, rock markings, camping places and ceremonial sites all hint at a culture stretching back to a time untold.

GETTING THERE

Girraween is 260 kilometres southwest of Brisbane, a pleasant three-hour drive. Follow the Ipswich Motorway on to the Cunningham Highway and head through to Warwick. From Warwick head south on to

the New England Highway, passing Stanthorpe. Twenty six kilometres after Stanthorpe take the signposted left-hand turnoff to Girraween National Park. After a few kilometres driving you will find yourself at the campgrounds and information centre.

WARNINGS/SAFETY

There are some environmentally sensitive areas within the park, so tread lightly wherever you go. Some of the caves harbour delicate glow worm and bat colonies and these shouldn't be disturbed.

BUSH CAMPING

Remote bush camping is available for the more adventurous. Set your tent up by a quietly bubbling brook or roll out your sleeping bag in a sheltering cave and enjoy the serenity and solitude of remote camping. There are conditions placed on camping in the park and you are best to seek advice from the park rangers.

MAPS

The best maps are Girraween, Bald Rock and Sundown National Parks by Hema and Sunmap's Girraween (9240-21).

THE WALKS THE PYRAMIDS

If you do nothing else when you visit Girraween you must visit the Pyramids. This is an easy walk from both campsites on well-maintained tracks so there is no excuse not to.

The Pyramids are two large domes of granite standing side by side and rising high above the tree line. The first Pyramid is accessed directly from the track. When you hit the steep bare granite slope the way up is indicated by white markings on the ground.

At the top there is an impressive array of large scattered boulders. In defiance of gravity these boulders refuse to tumble down the steep sides of the dome. One resembles a giant distorted peanut balancing on its end – scarcely a walker would leave without a photo of themselves holding this rock up. When you tear your eyes away from the boulders you will find it impossible to miss the stunning vision of the second Pyramid. It almost appears close

enough to reach out and touch. Also visible is the large bare surface of Slip Rock to the northeast and the Sphinx and Turtle Rock to the south.

This can also make a great night walk. Arm yourself with a torch, warm clothes and some good company, then wander on up and appreciate the glorious night sky from the best seat in the house.

The untracked second Pyramid isn't quite so easily tamed, sitting just northeast of the first Pyramid. A tricky descent from the first Pyramid is necessary and then a walk through the scrubby bush skirting the base of the second is taken to its north side. Here a series of fissures that are not easily found and quite difficult to negotiate are used to scramble up to the peak. The top of the second Pyramid affords terrific 360° views of the surrounding countryside.

THE SPHINX AND TURTLE ROCK

The Sphinx is a distinctive landmark that keeps a watchful eye over the surrounding territory. The track in is an easy 7.4 kilometre return journey, but you should leave at least four hours up your sleeve – keeping in mind that it's easy to get sidetracked.

At the Sphinx you are met by a tight cluster of monoliths sitting on a large granite slab. While all of them are impressive, the feature standing at the heart of the cluster stands tallest of all: the Sphinx proper has at its apex a massive boulder balancing precariously on its edge, making

it resemble its famous Egyptian namesake from a distance.

After you've explored the various nooks and crannies at the Sphinx, Turtle Rock is just a short walk away. Yet another giant dome of granite, Turtle Rock offers fantastic views north back over to the Sphinx and beyond to Castle Rock and the Pyramids. Turtle Rock can consume a lot of your time. The site is teeming with holes, cracks and tight squeezes that are just crying out to be squeezed into.

DR ROBERTS WATERHOLE, WAVE ROCK AND UNDERGROUND CREEK

While this area is not extensive it is well worth a visit. The track starts at Dr Roberts car park and travels gently uphill through the woodlands. After 1.2 kilometres you reach the still, mirror-like surface of Dr Roberts Waterhole. This forms part of Bald Rock Creek and is a popular home for many varieties of bird species along with an assortment of swamp-loving plants.

Branching off from this track is a path leading to Wave Rock and Underground Creek. This will extend the trip a bit but the effort is well rewarded.

The track terminates at a great wave of

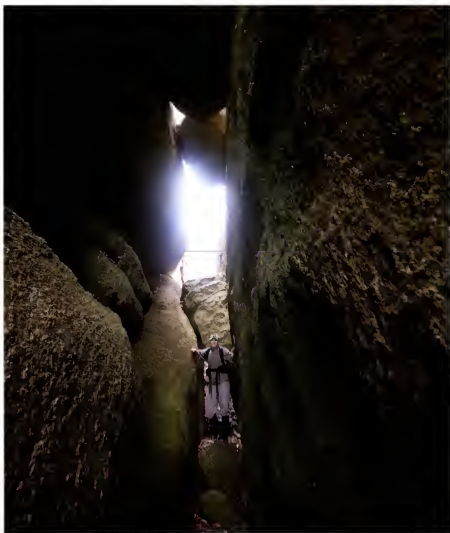
solid granite, frozen in time and streaked in rich earthy browns and oranges as it leans over a jumble of granite slabs and boulders. Wave Rock masks some more interesting features down below. Bald Rock Creek disappears into the mess of boulders and has created a small network of chambers. Shaped and smoothed over the millennia by cool flowing water the chambers are abstractly sculptured and vividly coloured. Although fascinating it is cramped, wet, slippery and potentially dangerous down there, so enter at your own risk.

CASTLE ROCK

Access to Castle Rock is by the same track used to get to the Sphinx and Mt Norman. As you approach Castle Rock a large bulging wall of granite closes in on the right. From here you pick your way through the boulders until you come to a large fissure in a towering block of rock. At this point it turns a little 'Indiana Jones'. The track goes through this shaft as boulders jammed in the space above hang threateningly.

When you pass to the other side a vista opens up with glorious views to the north, including the Pyramids and Slip Rock.

***Clockwise from right,** exploring a chasm at Turtle Rock. Climbers below the Sphinx. A tight squeeze at Turtle Rock.*



Follow the white marker lines to the right past some short cliffs, then pass through some trees and scramble to the top.

At the summit the view is revealed: Bald Rock, Mt Norman, the Sphinx and Turtle Rock are all displayed in a line from left to right. This has got to be one of the best vantage points in the park.

MT NORMAN

To get to Mt Norman you continue along the track that leads past Castle Rock. This is one of the longer walks in the park being 10.4 kilometres from the Castle Rock Campground. You should leave yourself about six hours to complete the walk.

As you approach Mt Norman a long, bulging slab appears before you. Skirt around to its left then head up on an expansive dome of granite, speckled with an assortment of weather-worn boulders resembling abstract sculptures. After reaching the top of the dome you look up and in the distance higher ground beckons you onwards.

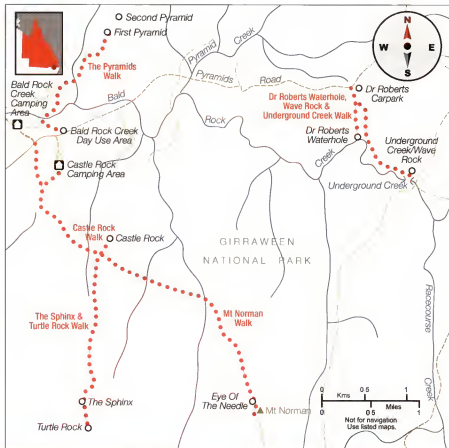
As you continue on past giant balancing rocks it's hard not to stop and stare, in awe of both the beauty and the physics of the landscape. The white markers urge you on as the track cuts through the scrub and past more great slabs with large fissures dissecting them.

Finally, you reach the walker's summit (the very top is unreachable without climbing gear). It is littered with great

stone boulders piled very close together and often on top of each other. The track guides you around the mass and through the chaos. Prominent on the north side is the Eye of the Needle. Funny enough, when viewed from the correct angle it resembles a giant needle eye.

From the east side of Norman you take in some great views of Twin Peaks.

Impressive views are obtained from the western slopes to the north and west. The main interest here however is the rocks surrounding you. Surreal and beautiful, they wrap their arms around you in a cold yet heartwarming embrace. [W](#)



Below, looking towards the Second Pyramid from the First Pyramid.



Outdoor Photography: *Tripods*

Craig Ingram introduces the first in a new series of articles on outdoor photography



Tripods allow you to shoot with very slow shutter speeds and achieve interesting effects, particularly with moving subjects like water; the Twelve Apostles on the Victorian coastline. Far right, in low-light conditions, such as this sunset shot of the Mount Lofty Ranges in South Australia, a tripod is indispensable. Both photos by the author

When shooting digital there are many elements that can be corrected if they aren't right when the shutter is fired. Exposure, colour balance, contrast, even composition (via cropping) can be altered to differing degrees to enhance the original file. However, one element cannot be corrected after the fact: image sharpness, one of the commonest causes for failed images. It's not worth even asking about sharpening in Photoshop, it just doesn't work. If your file isn't sharp it's good for one thing only: deletion.

One of the main causes of blurry images is camera movement (the other is poor focusing) and it is easily avoided by using a tripod and cable release. Tripods are great for a number of reasons, but first we will get the only negative out of the way, weight. When loaded up with camping gear that last thing you want to do is add anything considered nonessential. Here the problem lies in what is deemed nonessential. A tripod is essential for sharp images, especially when using the slow

shutter speeds and small apertures required for most landscape photography. When you realise that a tripod is an essential tool for good photography, along with the fact that

'Using a tripod sounds easy enough but there are a few tricks to get the most out of it'

modern materials and designs have made tripods much lighter and more compact than just a few years ago, it is easy to make room for one.

Now on to the reasons a tripod is an essential tool for making great images. Firstly, providing your camera with a good sturdy base allows for the longer shutter speeds that are required for shooting in the early morning and late into the evening when the light is at its nicest. No one can hand-hold a camera at 1/2 second exposure and hope for sharp images, but with a good tripod you can easily shoot

multiple second exposures, creating dramatic effects like softening moving water or shooting long after the sun has set. I also like using a tripod as it slows down the photo-taking process, giving you more time to think about each shot rather than snapping away in the hope that one will turn out to be a winner. Another bonus is that you are not holding your camera to your eye all the time, which can be hard work, particularly if you have a long lens on. You get to rest when the camera is on the tripod, giving you more energy to concentrate on your photographic vision.

Using a tripod sounds easy enough but there are a few tricks to get the most out of it. When shooting carry the camera attached to the tripod with the legs extended and slung over one shoulder; this speeds the set-up process. You don't want to walk with it on your shoulder all day, but by restricting your shooting to the early mornings and evenings and travelling during the day when the light is harsh (with the majority of your camera gear stowed in your pack) you will end up with

more pleasing images. When I find a locale that contains a scene I want to shoot, I place the tripod down, take the camera off the head and start scouting the area for the photos. There is very little chance that you will find the right place the first time you put your tripod down, so scout the area looking through the viewfinder and experimenting with different framings and focal lengths until you are happy with the location of the shot – then you can set up the tripod, adjust the height and start to shoot, hopefully only having to make small changes to the tripod height and location. It is also a good practice to press firmly on to the tripod to seat it, this helps to ensure it stays put.

When looking to purchase a tripod there are a few things to look for. Firstly, it should reach eye level with your camera attached without extending the centre column. Extending the centre column is like having a monopod with legs and almost defeats the purpose of having a tripod. Having to stoop for prolonged periods will hurt and take away from the photo-taking experience. I recommend a tripod without a centre column at all so as to avoid the temptation of raising the column and so that the legs can be extended outwards, permitting the whole unit to sit flat on the ground. This is an

important feature if you shoot a lot of macro subjects, allowing you to get closer and shoot a better angle for ground-dwelling subjects. Materials used in construction are plentiful: aluminium is cheap but not as robust as some modern materials such as carbon fibre. Carbon fibre is stronger, lighter and is not as cold to the touch as metal legs, but it is more expensive.



Tripod heads come in a multitude of designs but all can be put in to two basic categories. Pan-tilt heads have separate knobs that independently control each axis of movement, which is great if you need precise control. Ball heads have one knob that gives you access to a full range of movement and is my preferred unit as it makes adjusting and framing your shot both simpler and faster. If you do decide on a ball head look for one that has an extra

pan control knob in case you want to try your hand at panoramic photography. Whichever head you decide on look at one that has a quick release plate to speed up attaching your camera (and get a plate for each camera and lens you use.)

Sometimes it is just not possible to use a tripod. What follows are a few tips to help when you are hand-holding your camera.

- Take a firm stance with your feet shoulder width apart.
- Cup the lens in your left hand, never grab it over the top.
- Place your index finger just in front of the shutter release button.
- Bring the camera to your eye tucking your elbows firmly against your body.
- Press the viewfinder against your forehead.
- Take a deep breath, exhale and roll your finger across the shutter button making sure not to stab or press down.

Practise these few steps until they feel like second nature and you will be walking away with sharper images in no time.

Craig Ingram is an Adelaide-based nature photographer and writer. He believes that sharing his passion for the outdoors and photography can help to educate and protect our wilderness areas. For more info about upcoming photography workshops go to craigingramphoto.com.au



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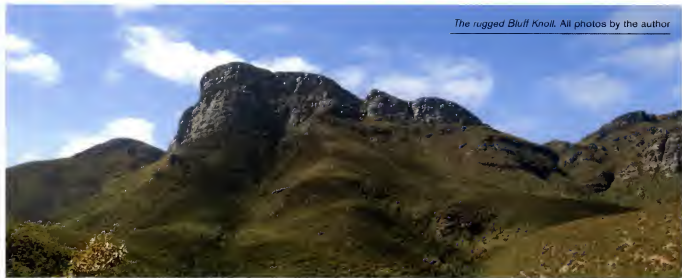
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Photo: Jared Jumping, Fitz Roy Range, Argentine Patagonia © Topher Donahue / Aurora

A Stirling Experience

The walks



The rugged Bluff Knoll. All photos by the author

Dave Caudwell outlines five walks in Western Australia's Stirling Ranges

Rising up from paddocks of wheat and rapeseed, from a distance the volcanic-like peaks of the Stirling Ranges resemble the smooth waves of an ocean frozen in time. Up close the peaks, situated 337 kilometres south of Perth, are craggy and studded with sharp ridges.

Walking around the ranges today it's hard to fathom that they were once layers of sand, silt and clay lying at the bottom of a shallow sea. Over time the seabed slowly compressed into layers of rock. And when the earth's crust

buckled 1100 million years ago these layers were thrust into the sky. The Stirling Ranges were listed as Western Australia's third national park back in 1913. Before that they were hunting grounds for two Indigenous tribes. White settlers never got to grips with the land, unable to graze their cattle due to the number of poisonous bushes dotting the landscape. Today, there are over 1500 species of wildflower in the park, 87 of these endemic to the ranges. Critically endangered shrubs populate

the eastern slopes and the park also protects a number of plant genii that teeter on the precipice of extinction. From east to west the range spans 65 kilometres and etched into the dynamic terrain are a number of walks. The five featured below may not cover a lot of distance, but they all scale summits that provide gorgeous vistas of the park and are guaranteed to get your heart pumping. The order of the walks is as you'll encounter them driving from west to east.

ACCESS

From Perth take the Albany Highway (Route 30) all the way to the rural town of Cranbrook. From here the ranges are roughly 15 kilometres to the east. Salt River Road takes you into the park.

WHEN TO GO

The best time of year is between September and October when wildflowers are in full bloom. Those with a keen eye can spot orchids from mid-August to early November. Winter brings biting southerly winds and snow to the peaks. Because of the scrambling and rock-hopping involved on some of the tracks, it's probably best to avoid walking at this time of year.

SAFETY/WARNINGS

Shaded gully areas form ideal habitats for scorpions and tiger snakes. As some walks involve walking through dense scrub, keep a look out and perhaps wear gaiters to minimise the chances of a bite. Also be prepared for sudden changes



of weather on the peaks. Sunny days can deteriorate rapidly and any rain will make the rocks slippery and descents even trickier. None of the walks should be attempted in heavy rain.

FURTHER INFORMATION

There is a campsite at Moingup Spring on Chester Pass Road, near the turn-off to Toobrunup Peak. You can get drinking water from here and there is a rangers' office nearby.

Camping fees apply. There is also accommodation at the Stirling Range Retreat, also located on the Chester Pass Road directly opposite the Bluff Knoll turn-off.

FURTHER READING

Mountain Walks in the Stirling Range is a two-part guidebook by Tony Morphet and contains track notes on all the walks in the area.



THE WALKS

Mt Magog

From the Mt Magog Picnic Area, this track starts in an easygoing fashion and weaves through tall white gum woodland. In spring the bush will be awash with wildflowers of blue, yellow and pink. After roughly 500 metres the track opens out and the knobbly Talyuberlup Peak appears straight ahead. At first it looks as though the path is heading towards Talyuberlup, but as the track gets steeper and the rock looser underfoot, it gradually curves round to the left and disappears into thick bush, some of which is overgrown in places. Continue to climb until you reach a small clearing. If it's blustery or showery on the summit then this is a good place to stop and unscrew the thermos. From here the grade changes from four to five and it's a scramble to the twin peaks of Mt Magog. Panoramic views of the surrounding countryside make the climb well worth it, and you'll get a side on view of the next peak on the list, Talyuberlup.

WALK AT A GLANCE

Distance: Seven kilometres return

Time: Three to four hours

Grade: Hard (Class Five)

Height: 856 metres

Start/Finish: Mt Magog Picnic Area

Access: Enter the park by driving east from Cranbrook along Salt River Road. Take a right-hand turn on to Gum Pass Road (gravel road) and drive for seven or eight kilometres before taking the first turning on the left on to Stirling Range Drive (also a gravel road). Pass the Western Lookout and White Gum Flat Picnic Area before turning left into Mt Magog Picnic Area.

Talyuberlup Peak

Fans of narrow gullies and rocky spires will love this walk, which is steep from the off with lots of scree underfoot. The track begins on the opposite side of the road from the Talyuberlup Peak Picnic Area. The first 500 metres or so ascends through gum trees, thereafter the track opens out and climbs even more steeply. On this section of the track you may hear duck-like sounds. These are the calls of the quacking frog.

Around 400 metres from the top, the track cuts around the left-hand side of Talyuberlup's rock face and there is clambering involved. The track then dips before rearing steeply once more. After more scrambling, veer right and climb to the summit. If it is windy then come down a few metres and squat inside a rocky shelter for majestic views of the western side of the park. This is a good place to spot wedge-tailed eagles

as they drift on air currents.

When descending, take care on the steep sections and especially on the scree.

WALK AT A GLANCE

Distance: Three kilometres return

Time: Two hours

Grade: Moderate (Class Four)

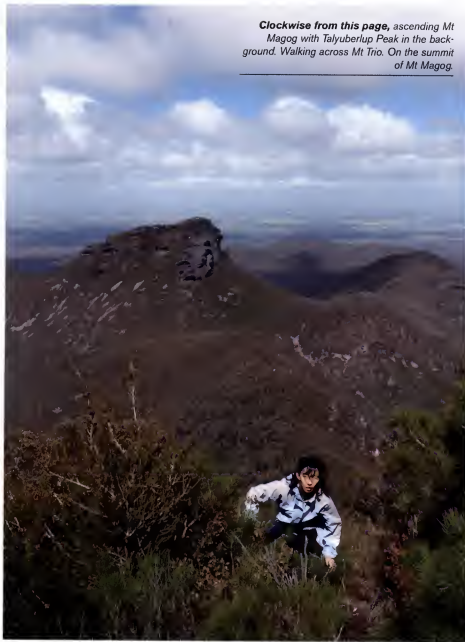
Height: 783 metres

Start/Finish: Talyuberlup Peak Picnic Area

Access: From Mt Magog Picnic Area, rejoin Stirling Range Drive with a left turn and drive roughly 4.5 kilometres, past Central Lookout, until you reach a small picnic area on the right-hand side of the road. The walking track is located opposite.



Clockwise from this page, ascending Mt Magog with Talyuberlup Peak in the background. Walking across Mt Trio. On the summit of Mt Magog.



Toolbrunup Peak

This is the second highest peak in the Stirling Ranges and the most difficult walk of the five. Be prepared to boulder-hop and clamber up steep, rocky sections.

The first part of this walk winds gently through a eucalypt forest interspersed with wattle trees. Again the track is loose underfoot. After a kilometre it gets steep and you encounter the first scramble over large and loose rocks. Follow the yellow-topped poles across the boulderfield. After 200–300 metres the track disappears into dense bush before coming out at another section of large rocks. After scrambling over these the path veers right – there are some slippery sections here so take care.

The final ascent involves a section of around 100 metres where you have to pull yourself up to the summit, on top of which you'll find rock rippled like sand on a beach – evidence of the ranges' rise from the sea. The summit is poky, around the size of half

a tennis court, but there are some terrific views that give you different perspectives of Mt Magog and Talyuberlup Peak.

WALK AT A GLANCE

Distance: Four kilometres return

Time: Three to four hours

Grade: Hard (Class Five)

Height: 1052 metres

Start/Finish: Toolbrunup car park

Access: Keep driving along Stirling Range Drive until you reach Chester Pass Road, which will be in the form of a T-junction. This road is sealed. Turn right and follow it for a short way before turning right again just before the Park Office and Moingup Spring Campground. Follow a gravel road until it terminates.

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Mt Trio

Although this walk is less difficult than Talyuberup, the first part of the Mt Trio track is steeper – a mixture of steps carved out of rock and wooden beams. This is a reasonably new track having been completed after a bushfire in 1996. The route takes you over three peaks that are all linked by a plateau. The first of those peaks is to your right as you ascend from the car park.

Around halfway into the ascent the gradient eases and the track curves to the right and on to the first of the three peaks. In some places the track is narrow and overgrown and bushes scrape against you. Grass trees flank the track, their spiky green tops like bad '80s hairdos. To the right the view is of yellow and green paddocks, and to the left you'll see the rolling peaks of the southwest Stirling Ranges.

Just before the summit, a small path veers off to the left and on to a rocky, sloped

viewing platform. This is one of the best lookouts in the park from which you can see all of the peaks you've scaled so far.

WALK AT A GLANCE

Distance: 3.5 kilometres return

Time: Three hours

Grade: Moderate (Class Four)

Height: 856 metres

Start/Finish: Mt Trio car park

Access: Retrace your steps back to Chester Pass Road and turn left, driving back past the turn-off for Stirling Range Drive and turning left at the first road after that, Formby South Road (also sealed). Follow this for a short way until you see a left turn off the road and on to a gravel road. At the end of this is Mt Trio car park.



For further information and your nearest retail outlet visit
www.12vsportlightaustralia.com.au



Clockwise from above, pausing for a breather halfway up the track to Mt Magog. One of many flowering shrubs in the park. Looking out from Talyuberlup Peak. A quacking frog.



climbing easier than on any of the other walks, although the gradient will still have you panting, until you come out of the trees after roughly two kilometres. From here the terrain eases and it appears as though the path is heading away from the summit. The track slowly bears left and gradually ascends, traversing heath land. Most of the Stirling Ranges sprawl to your left and by the time you reach the summit the car park appears no bigger than your thumbnail.

Bluff Knoll

The highest peak in the range, and the tallest one for 1000 kilometres in any direction, Bluff Knoll is the most popular walk in the park and the track is very well formed. There is a tariff of \$11 per vehicle and \$5 per person to enter this section of the Stirling Ranges.

The Nyoongar people – one of the tribes that used to hunt here – call Bluff Knoll Bular Mial which translates as ‘many eyes’, so-called because of the copious indentations in the rock face that look like they’re watching you.

After leaving the paved track from the car park, the first half a kilometre or so is easygoing before things get steep. Bluff Knoll looms impossibly and it seems as though you’ll have to walk further than 3.1 kilometres to reach its zenith.

The peak disappears as you enter the bush. Steep steps in the rock make the

WALK AT A GLANCE

Distance: 6.2 kilometres return

Time: Three to four hours

Grade: Moderate (Class Four)

Height: 1095 metres (although some list it as 1073 metres)

Start/Finish: Bluff Knoll car park

Access: retrace your steps back to Chester Pass Road, turning left on to it and driving until you see a turn-off for Bluff Knoll (the first right turn). Follow the windy sealed road all the way up to Bluff Knoll car park.

When Dave Caudwell isn't asking for chit cake instead of chocolate cake in Peru (that's the last time he'll get kaka and coco mixed up) he likes clambering up steep hills and getting his boots dirty whenever he can.



SWISHEST OF SQUIRRELS

Dr Steve Van Dyck spruiks the many virtues of our native 'squirrels'

Sydney's Taronga Zoo used to have two huge attractions: King Kong, a lone male gorilla half demented with boredom; and elephant rides that forcefully removed anything still remaining in your stomach after the ferry trip across the harbour. But to young schoolboys addicted to a new technological wonder – TV, and its *Zoo Quest* program (featuring a then skinny, pipe-smoking David Attenborough) – the main attraction inside Taronga's walls wasn't so much the animals behind bars as two irresistible attractions that scampered around outside the cages: squirrels and bantams.

The tiny bantam chicks were easy to catch but impossible to conceal. They always had a psychotically protective hen close by who'd go off her brain and fly at you flapping and screeching the moment a captured chick started cheeping. On the other hand, the tiny feral squirrels (Indian palm squirrels, *Funambulus pennanti*, which we wrongly called 'chipmunks') would probably have been easier to conceal, but were impossible to catch – either by hand or with the lead-weighted casting nets we smuggled in to fling at them. They had reflexes like rattlesnakes and corkscrewed up and around tree trunks before the nets even left our hands.

Most of the introduced Taronga squirrels died out when the old palm trees were removed, while the rest were poisoned when the zoo was forced to use baits to clean up its rat problem.

A few palm squirrels still scamper

around South Perth in Western Australia, leftovers from an 1898 zoo release, but these (and a failed liberation of grey squirrels in Melbourne from around the 1930s) are about as close as Australia ever got to hosting a feral population of these bushy-tailed nut scratchers. Just as well really, squirrels are feral rodents we were lucky to miss out on. As Sarah Jessica Parker's *Sex in the City* character, Carrie Bradshaw, once said, 'You can't be friends with a squirrel! A squirrel is just a rat with a cuter outfit.'

Anyway, Australia already had its own infinitely more charming 'squirrels' long before the ill-informed releases of ill-suited imports by acclimatisation societies and zoos that should have known better. In fact, Australia's marsupial squirrel-equivalents are arguably the most exquisitely appealing

and would make charming pets, but like many gentles of another race they display their dress and pursue their pleasure only at night.'

The 'petaurists' in question are squirrel gliders (*Petaurus norfolkensis*) and sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*), pouched marsupials that superficially, if astonishingly, resemble flying squirrels from North America, Europe and Southeast Asia. But the resemblance is shallower than skin deep; one of the reasons why white Australians were so anxious to import real (rodent) squirrels was that all the small, high-ranking cute-factor mammals in Australia were never seen doing their thing – they were as nocturnal then as they are now. And this is probably an underlying reason why Australians have such a shameful record of custodial care: we claim only

'As Sarah Jessica Parker's *Sex in the City* character, Carrie Bradshaw, once said, "You can't be friends with a squirrel! A squirrel is just a rat with a cuter outfit."

creatures on the planet. But sadly they suffer from a 'marketing problem', one succinctly recognised by Charles de Vis, one-time Anglican clergyman and later Curator of the Queensland Museum (1882–1891): 'With their soft-piled, delicately-tinted mantle of silky fur, calm demeanour and admirable temper, the petaurists are the gentles of the race

about seven per cent of the world's mammal species but have accounted for about 30 per cent of the world's mammal extinctions. Out of sight – out of mind.

We could blame it on the oh-so-too-late breakthroughs in torch and spotlight technology, but even then who among us ever has the energy or interest to go out after dinner and watch timid Australian



animals darting for cover at the snapping of a twig? We could also blame a constipated and myopic faunal protection system that prevents Australians from keeping sugar gliders as pets – no one who holds a sugar glider in their hands would ever let a domestic cat out after dark. And one can hardly excuse zoologists like myself for failing to get this message across to an unfamiliar public: here is a unique and precious native (albeit sleeping) fauna in need of protection.

But really, our flying squirrels are not that hard to see, especially when most readers will already relish camping out, as well as knowing who they are sharing the campsite with. A good start is to get familiar with their calls. Sugar gliders sound like little dogs barking (angelfire.com/nb/sugarglider/sounds/bark.wav), some might say more like a soft toy dog that yaps when you squeeze it. Bigger squirrel gliders don't yap but make a grumpy nasal sound like 'inwarr' or just 'warr' repeated (sometimes ad nauseam). These are alarm calls and if you follow the sound with a torch to its source you'll generally find a glider head-pointing-down on a tree trunk, perfectly still but, perversely, calling loudly. Alternatively, smear some honey on a tree trunk and

watch who comes during the night. If there are trees (particularly gums) in flower, lie back with the extracted bladder from a cardboard wine-cask behind your neck and scan the flowers with a torch pressed against the side of your binoculars: a marvellous way to mix business with... sleep.

There is an even more magnificent species of Australian glider, however, whose tenuous existence may have remained unknown if the late Tony Marsilio of Euramo (near Tully, Queensland) hadn't confused one for a fantastic squirrel and had it stuffed by a local artisan, who obligingly balanced a walnut in its paw for authenticity. In 1974, cane farmer Tony's brother had accidentally killed it while clearing lowland coastal woodland (affectionately referred to as 'shit country' by many there). Tony's wife Nancy had displayed the mounted glider in her private museum bearing a label 'Fly Squirrel'. Neither Tony nor Nancy knew that the only other (three) stuffed specimens of this species in existence lay in a drawer of the Queensland Museum, having all been collected in 1882 and not knowingly seen alive for 107 years.

The search for, and subsequent discovery of, some living mahogany gliders (*Petaurus*

The extremely rare but very handsome mahogany glider was thought extinct until recently. Queensland Museum/Bruce Cowell

gacilis) soon after (1989) on Tony's property ended four years of research that began when those three old glider skins were found while the Queensland Museum was packing up and moving across the Brisbane River to new premises in 1986. Curiously, the species had been formally described in 1883 by none other than the newly appointed Curator of the Queensland Museum, Charles de Vis, but soon thereafter the species disappeared off the scientific radar.

In a bizarre twist of the endangered mahogany glider's tale, its entire geographic range (coastal Tully to Ingham, with Cardwell in between) was this year battered to shreds by cyclone Yasi. Meanwhile the Queensland Museum holding the historical glider skins, in its improved location within Brisbane's Southbank Cultural Precinct, was swamped under brown sludge issuing from a raging Brisbane River – the result of devastating floods on a scale not seen since 1974.

Dr Steve Van Dyck is the Senior Curator of Vertebrates at the Queensland Museum.

Sacks for Backs

Steve Waters surveys rucksacks for multiday bushwalking

I own several rucksacks. For extended off-track walking in Tasmania I prefer my two-compartment 85-litre canvas pack that's been swum across creeks, dropped off cliffs, scraped through head-high melaleuca, covered in mud and rained on every other day. It takes a beating and in 13 years it's only ever needed some stitching to the hip-belt. A lighter 70-litre single-compartment sack gets a run in more vertical or snowy conditions above the treeline, while my go-to travel pack is a well abused 65-litre Cordura twin-compartment job that smells vaguely of yak dung. A cheapie, this pack has seen the inside of yurts, fallen into fires, been slashed by baggage handlers and ridden umpteen thousands of kilometres on tops of buses and in aircraft holds. Sometimes, I even walk with it. Different applications require different criteria – my 85-litre pack had to be durable and comfortable while carrying gear for ten days and, at the time, canvas was the hardest wearing pack fabric. Heavy, especially when wet, it will still outlast most modern blends, though certain Corduras and Aztec (canvas/

synthetic crosses) aren't far behind, and have the edge in weight. Durability is also dependent on good design: reinforced stress points, no sharp angles, good (double-stitched) seam placement and harness attachment. I went for a two-compartment pack because that's how I like to organise my gear, even though the bottom zip (any zip) is a weak point and could allow water ingress. For climbing or ski-touring, the 70-litre pack needed to be light and comfortable with a seven-day range, and the synthetic, single compartment design, with no heavy zips and shock-corded gear array works well. The travel pack had to be cheap (expendable), compact (for transport), tough and light (nylon), but still useful for trekking.

While modern packs come with a variety of bells and (literally) whistles, don't get too caught up with features. The single most important aspect when buying a rucksack is that it fits properly. If it's not comfortable under your normal full load, try another brand. Assess weak points (zips, seams, belts, straps, connection points, anything that's likely to snag or

break) and think about your intended normal usage: where (on or off-track, climbing, snow, temperate or tropics, local or overseas), when (two-, three- or four-season), how long (two to three days, four to seven days, ten plus days) and how much gear? Where and when decide the material and design (the rougher the going, the more durability and less bling you'll need), while the hows indicate capacity – use 75-litres as a rough average for up to seven days. Do you need ice-axe loops, tops that double as bumbags, hydration bladder pockets or pole storage facilities? Pack fabrics range from lightweight nylon, through various denier polyesters and Corduras to heavyweight canvas. Some materials are more water-resistant than others, though all leak eventually and you'll need a decent pack liner regardless. This survey looks at rucksacks suitable for extended multiday bushwalking in Australia and New Zealand. All packs were sized medium and weighed by the reviewer unless noted otherwise.

BLACK DIAMOND INFINITY (60 LITRES) RRP \$300

Weighing in at only 1.9 kilograms, the climbing pedigree of the Infinity is clear, yet its clever, minimalist design makes it a worthy choice for shorter walks (up to four days) as well. Strong, light ripstop nylon, a simple harness and removable pivoting hip-belt cater easily for loads up to 18 kilograms. The single no-nonsense compartment (with hydration pocket) has a fully extendable (and removable) top, and quality stitching reinforces all stress points. There's a generous storm throat and the side compression straps double as closers for the large front and two side pockets. The pack is refreshingly free of snag potential, and has a neat hip-belt pocket, though the 'ventilated' harness still proves sweaty. Thin straps save weight, though sometimes these (like the sternum strap) can slip a little, and the top pocket zip is unprotected and feels fragile. It's not as light as the Exos (nothing surveyed is), yet it's probably a touch bigger and certainly better padded. For \$300 you get a choice of two colours and back lengths. blackdiamondequipment.com



**BLACKWOLF BUGABOO
(60 + 10 LITRES) RRP \$280**

A two-compartment 450 denier polyester pack with a comfortable harness and a reasonable price (\$280) – who could ask for more? This is a great entry-level pack, with an integrated rain cover, an internal hydration pocket and single reflective daisy chain gear loop. Very light at 2.15 kilograms, the harness handles weight well and the hip-belt pivots nicely. The reasonably sized bottom compartment is let down only by a drawstring (as opposed to zippered) divider, which makes it harder to stow long objects like tent poles internally. There's two long zippered side pockets, and lots of big fasteners, though the compression straps don't attach to a seam, rather to a type of gusset that may wear adversely, and also faces forward, offering a potential snag profile. The pack narrows towards the top and would suit hut trekking or weekenders on well-defined tracks. There's three colours and two sizes. backwolf.com.au

**DENALI MATTERHORN
(60 LITRES) RRP \$220**

The cheapest pack in the survey doesn't lack for features with an internal hydration pocket, fully extendable and removable top, reasonable storm throat, protected zippers, two compartments with a zipped divider and two nice long side pole pockets. However, for this price you don't get double-stitched seams for durability, and the hip-belt isn't stiff enough for heavy loads. There's two mesh pockets on the belt, a rather useless small vertical zippered back pocket on top of a larger open storage area, and the base of serious walking packs, a full length zipper opening directly into the inner pack. The ripstop polyester should provide reasonable wear. This entry-level pack would suit novices not sure about their walking commitment and it's light enough for weekend use (2.4 kilograms). A 75-litre version is also available. anaconda.com.au


**WILDERNESS EQUIPMENT MOUNTAIN
EXPEDITION (100+ LITRES) RRP \$370**

Better known for its bulletproof canvas bushwalking packs, this Wilderness Equipment offering looks more suited to above the snowline. The largest capacity pack in the survey comes with a huge roll-up throat designed to double as a 3/4 bivy, and provides a host of attachments most walkers will never need, including ice-axe tubes and a top shockcord arrangement waiting to catch on the first low melaleuca. The top extends in case 100-litres isn't enough, and detaches completely, turning into a bum bag. The 450 denier polyester is light and tough and 3.3 kilograms isn't heavy for its size. A full access side zip just isn't useful with a bag liner, and while the independent pivoting hip-belt is comfy, the harness I found less so, with the metal stays digging into my back. While not ideal for bushwalking, \$370 is very reasonable for such a large dedicated mountaineering pack and there's a choice of four back lengths.

wildernessequipment.com.au

**DEUTER AIRCONTACT
(65 + 10 LITRES) RRP \$395**

Perhaps it's my shape (thin, medium height), but the two-compartment Deuter fitted perfectly and was one of the most comfortable packs reviewed. Rather large for 65-litres (let's face it, it's a 75-litre), with a harness to rival One Planet, it displays great attention to detail (eg. double-skinned main compartment, side hydration pockets, useful non-snagging daisy chain, non-mesh belt pocket, double storm throats). The hip-belt is luxuriously padded, the harness easily adjusted, and the second compartment (zippered divider) is a decent size. Pocket lovers will enjoy the ample, though unobtrusive offerings (side, back, top, inside) including two open side pole pockets, and there's also a very neat zip-away pack cover. Made of 420 denier polyamide, the pack feels both light and spacious, and would suffice for all but the thickest scrub – all in all, a great all-rounder. \$395 for 3.1 kilograms.

deuter.com





MONT SPHERE
(85 LITRES) RRP \$500

Should serious bushwalking packs have side suitcase handles, a roll-up zip cover to hide the harness, a detachable, padded two-compartment day-pack and a zip that opens up the whole back of the pack? If you think so, then step right up, the Sphere is your baby. Local canvas and generous zippers shine in a pack built to last – and to be carried by airplanes, buses, rickshaws, Sherpas or yaks. You might make it to Kalar Pattar or even cruise the Overland Track, but this pack is just too heavy for extended walking and the harness didn't feel like it coped well with the test weight. The detachable day-pack is beautifully crafted, well padded and has plenty of pockets including an internal hydration provision, but honestly guys, this is a travel pack. Not surprisingly, at 3.7 kilograms it's the heaviest pack surveyed, and your \$500 gets you a choice of three sizes. mont.com.au



MACPAC CASCADE
(75 LITRES) RRP \$600

The original canvas 85-litre Macpac Cascade was legendary for its durability (and size) and for years was the pack of choice for any extended off-track epic. Hard shoes to fill, and this latest incarnation falls just a little short. The Liberator FL harness feels somewhat clunky, is a hassle to adjust, and the lumbar support is more irritating than comforting. That said, it's possible to get this pack to fit really snug to the body and the pivoting hip-belt works well. Macpac have saved weight by ditching full canvas for Aztec HP (canvas/synthetic cross) and trimming down straps and belts, though the pack still weighs in at three kilograms. The signature back pocket is now side opening and covered with a cord gear loop, while the double-skinned bottom compartment is rather small but has a good zipped divider. Two small zipped side pockets cater for poles, there's a decent storm throat with a well-protected hydration port (no bladder pocket), while a nifty attachment point on the hip-belt caters for a camera or GPS. \$600 buys you a choice of three colours and back lengths. macpac.com.au



MONT PIONEER
(85 LITRES) RRP \$480

The Pioneer is a large single-compartment pack in the classic design, constructed from locally sourced canvas and would work equally well on or off-track. With a huge storm throat, smaller folk could use it as a 3/4 bivvy. The hip-belt and harness felt comfortable, and adjusted easily thanks to colour-coded straps. Although I couldn't quite get the Pioneer to fit properly this was probably due to the sample being the larger back size (the medium is 80-litres). The top partially extends and there's two open side pole pockets and all zips are fully protected by storm flaps. Bladder lovers would need to use the single long vertically opening back pocket, as there's no internal provision. Most of the 85-litre range are very close in weight and price, weighing 2.9 kilograms for \$480, the Pioneer is ahead by a whisker.



MOUNTAIN DESIGNS MAIN RANGE
(65 LITRES) RRP \$400

Constructed from thick local canvas, this no-nonsense, two-compartment classic begs for some off-track action. At 3.25 kilograms, it's the heaviest in its capacity range, yet it's built to take a battering, with a generous double-skinned throat, large, fully protected zippers, and an absence of anything likely to snag. One large zipped back pocket, twin side elastic pole pockets and dual ice-axe loops complete the package. The only nod to modernity is the internal removable hydration pocket complete with shoulder straps. This pack feels larger than its stated 65-litre capacity and the lid will partially extend. I found the harness easily adjustable, although the somewhat aggressive lumbar support didn't fit my back shape and the hip-belt padding could extend a bit further. There's a larger 75-litre model (same price, \$400) for those with longer backs, but at 3.5 kilograms it's getting rather hefty. Choose red or blue. mountaindesigns.com.au



THE NORTH FACE TERRA (65 LITRES) RRP \$300

The twin-compartment Terra is made from hard-wearing 420 denier polyester. The harness is a little tricky to adjust, but once done it's set-and-forget, and proved quite supportive. The pack is refreshingly free of snagging potential, and most zips are covered by storm flaps, though the Terra still insists on a full-length side zipper opening directly into the central compartment. Two open mesh side pockets cater for poles and there's a rather weird funnel shaped vertical back pocket. Weighing 2.3 kilograms for \$300 there's not much between the Terra and the BlackWolf Bugaboo, and any choice would come down to comfort and features. Available in two colours and back lengths. thenorthface.com.au



TATONKA BISON EXP (75 LITRES) RRP \$600

Tatonka seems to be hedging its bets between bushwalking and travelling with the twin-compartment Bison, which both weighs a ton (3.6 kilograms) and costs a packet (\$600). The whole back of this garish (black and orange) pack zips open to reveal its inner compartment, which has further clips and dividers to separate the load. The top extends to make use of the generous storm throat, all the haul points are rubberised, and while pocket freaks will be satisfied by the many and various offerings, their fiddly zippers tend to catch. On the plus side, there's nothing left to snag and the heavy Cordura material should be up for some off-track action. The hip-belt is way too large and for this price and capacity you could have the bomber Macpac Cascade for a lot less weight. tatonka.com



OSPREY ARGON (85 LITRES) RRP \$500

A rather aggressively curved pack, the Argon might not suit everybody, though with individually moulded hip-belts (retailers are supplied with a special oven) Osprey are certainly trying to. Despite the moulding, the hip-belt still felt stiff and (on me anyway) dug in under load. The harness though, is excellent, and the midweight 315D Cordura and nylon fabric offers a reasonable trade-off between weight and durability. There's two main compartments, and both the extendable lid and the internal hydration pocket can be detached and worn on their own. The top pocket zip is devoid of any storm protection and there's lots of straps, toggles and gear loops to snag on things (especially the looped zipper closers). A full-length vertical zip accesses the inner compartment, fine for travelling, useless when using a pack liner. At just under three kilograms, for \$500 the Argon is indicative of the 85-litre range, but is better suited to good tracks in fine weather or travelling. Three back lengths available. ospreypacks.com

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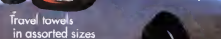
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OSPREY EXOS (58 LITRES) RRP \$280

Ultrahikers will love the Exos 58, weighing in at 1.2 kilograms, the lightest pack (and for \$280 one of the cheapest) in the survey. The mainly mesh harness (available in three back lengths) is well-ventilated, and supported by a moulded aluminium frame, though it allows only minimal adjustment. A single thin nylon compartment contains a hydration pocket, and while a storm flap protects the top pocket's zip, the other main body pockets are exposed. Two mesh side pockets open forward while the large back pocket feels sloppy compared to the Black Diamond Infinity. The thin seven-millimetre compression straps are a total pain to use, while I kept popping the 20-millimetre hip-belt. There's two mesh pockets on the hip-belt, and provision for trekking poles. This pack felt at its limit with the tested weight, around 18 kilograms, and while I'm sure some could take it to Tassie with food for a week, I couldn't fit my gear for a weekend at the Prom. If you can stand the extra weight, the Infinity is a better all-rounder in this capacity.

	CAPACITY, LITRES (MEDIUM SIZE)	MAIN MATERIAL	SURVEYOR'S WEIGHT, KILOGRAMS	COMPARTMENTS	APPROX PRICE, \$
Black Diamond Infinity	60	Nylon	1.9	1	300
BlackWolf Bugaboo	60 + 10	Polyester	2.15	2	280
Denali Matterhorn	60	Polyester	2.4	2	220
Deuter Aircontact 65 + 10	65 + 10	Polyamide	3.1	2	395
Macpac Cascade	75	Canvas/synthetic	3	2	600
Mont Pioneer	85	Canvas	2.9	1	480
Mont Sphere	85 (large)	Canvas	3.7	2	500
Mountain Designs Main Range	65	Canvas	3.25	2	400
The North Face Terra	65	Polyester	2.3	2	300
One Planet McMillan	85	Canvas	2.95	1	540
One Planet WBA	60	Canvas	2.1	1	400
Osprey Argon	85	Nylon	2.95	2	500
Osprey Exos	58	Nylon/polyester	1.2	1	280
Tatonka Bison EXP	75	Nylon	3.6	2	600
Wilderness Equipment Mountain Expedition	100+	Polyester	3.3	1	370



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oneplanet.com.au

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Essentially a tight 200gsm canvas haul sack, the 'Weights Bugger All' sports the same beautiful harness as the McMillan. Weighing only 2.1 kilograms, this single-compartment tapered pack has a large reinforced concave base and would be ideal for wet, rough conditions, transporting gear, organised groups or throwing out of a plane. There's no gear loops or anything to snag or break, and only a single top pocket and two forward facing bottle pockets next to the harness. The aluminium-hooked compression straps will survive hammer blows and a single hook fastens the top, allowing quick and easy access.

Some people might yearn for an extra pocket, and at \$400 it's relatively pricey for its capacity, yet in the 60-litre range it would be the first choice to take off-track. There's three capacities, four back lengths and all of them are grey.

In the next issue of Wild we survey rucksacks specifically for women, so ladies don't despair, your time is coming...

Steve Waters spent his formative years traveling and hawking dubious IT skills, before maturing into longer walks, climbing, writing and hawking dubious photos. His favourite wild places are Tasmania, New Zealand and Karakorum.

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Wild Diary

May
ACT Championships
8/24 hr R
14-15 May, ACT
rogaine.asn.au

The North Face 100 BR
14-15 May, NSW
arocport.com

Mini-rogaine R
15 May, Qld
rogaine.asn.au

Kathmandu Adventure Sprint M
21 May, NSW
maxadventure.com.au

State Championships
12/24 hr R
21-22 May, SA
rogaine.asn.au

8/24 hr R
28-29 May, Vic
rogaine.asn.au

Australian Mountain Running Championships BR
29 May, Qld
coolrunning.com.au

June
Serra Terror II - Dunkeld Adventure BR
10-13 June, Vic
dunkeldadventure.com

Oxfam Trailwalker Brisbane BR
17-19 June, Qld
trailwalker.oxfam.org.au

6/12 hr R
18 June, Qld
rogaine.asn.au

Point to Point 3/6/24 hr R
18-19 June, Qld
rogaine.asn.au

Winter 24 hr R
18-19 June, WA
rogaine.asn.au

Bush Mingaine 3 hr R
19 June, NT
rogaine.asn.au

Paddy Patin 6 hr R
19 June, NSW
rogaine.asn.au

6 hr R
25-26 June, Vic
rogaine.asn.au

July
Tough Bloke Challenge M
2 July, NSW
maxadventure.com.au

AUMC 12/24 hr R
16-17 July, SA
rogaine.asn.au

8 hr R
23 July, Vic
rogaine.asn.au

Bush Capital Bush Marathon Festival BR
30 July, ACT
coolrunning.com.au

August
Kathmandu Adventure Sprint M
6-7 August, NSW
maxadventure.com.au

Ben Lomond Descent M
7 August, Tas
tamar.canoe.org.au

Lake Macquarie 6/12 hr R
13 August, NSW
rogaine.asn.au

State Championships and Spring 24 hr R
13-14 August, WA
rogaine.asn.au

Metrogaine 5 hr, R
21 August, ACT
rogaine.asn.au

September
State Championships 24 hr R
3-4 September, Qld
rogaine.asn.au

Spring 6/12 hr R
10 September, SA
rogaine.asn.au

State Championships 24 hr R
10-11 September, NT
rogaine.asn.au

State Championships 15/24 hr R
17-18 September, NSW
rogaine.asn.au

Nightgaine 5 hr R
24 September, ACT
rogaine.asn.au

Kathmandu Max 12/24 M
24-25 September, NSW
maxadventure.com.au

October
Bush Rogaine 6 hr R
8 October, NT
rogaine.asn.au

Spring 12 hr R
15 October, WA
rogaine.asn.au

Metrogaine R
15 October, Qld
rogaine.asn.au

Spring 6/12 hr R
15 October, ACT
rogaine.asn.au

Wild Diary listings provide information about wilderness events. Send items for publication to ross.taylor@primecreative.com.au

Activities: BR bush running, M multisports, P paddling

O orienteering, R rogaining Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaining associations. Canoeing events are organised by the State canoeing associations unless otherwise stated.

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Real Fleece?

Purveyor of fine woolen products, **Icebreaker**, has released a new range it has dubbed **Real Fleece 320** (as opposed to that nasty fake synthetic fleece we presume). The 320 refers to the weight of fabric – 320gsm – and is a similar weight to your standard synthetic fleece. The first offering in the new range is the **Aspiring Zip**, a very smart number for men that would look equally at home in a South Melbourne single-origin coffee shop as out in the wilds. It features all the usual Icebreaker attention to detail, down to the snug fit and the high collar, while the fabric is unusually soft and warm (the editorial team may have been fortunate enough to try one on). It has a full length front zip, a zipped chest pocket and two hand-warmer pockets and comes in the only colour one should be seen dead in, Melbourne-black, which is like regular black only slightly smugger. The Aspiring Zip retails for \$279.95 and is available in a range of sizes from small to XXL. The women's model is called the Igloo Zip.

icebreaker.com.au

Light is Right

Sea to Summit has launched a new range of lightweight shelters it is calling the **Specialists**. The **Solo** and the **Duo** are clever crosses between a tent and a bivvy bag, borrowing aspects of both. The (clearly) one-person Solo weighs 625 grams, while the two-person (duh) Duo weighs 846 grams, which Sea to Summit claims makes them the lightest in their class. For the truly weight obsessed, the poles can be ditched and they can be erected using a pair of trekking poles and natural anchors, making them lighter again (Solo 445 grams, Duo 633 grams). The roof of each tent is made from Pertex Endurance, which is a 20-denier lightweight waterproof and breathable nylon (with a 1000 millimetre

waterhead), while the walls and floor use a 15-denier nylon (1200 millimetre waterhead). Both are seam-sealed and have an optional groundsheet available. The Solo retails for \$429 (groundsheet \$49), while the Duo is \$499 (groundsheet \$59).

seatosummit.com.au



The Kids are Okay

Or at least they will be if you kit them out with a decent **sleeping bag**. Guilt trips aside,

Macpac has released a new sleeping bag for your precious progeny, the **Kids' Escalade**. It is a 600 loft down-filled bag with a comfort rating of 2°C that comes with a 30D Vapourlite ripstop shell fabric (translation: it is water-resistant and breathable). It has all sorts of nice features like trapezoidal baffles, continuous baffles for strategic (and non-strategic) down placement, a zip draft-tube, elasticated down collar, a compression sac and a mesh storage sac. With its compression sac the whole ensemble weighs 810 grams, while the bag itself is 133 centimetres in length and retails for \$279.95. macpac.com.au



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You can tell a company cares about weight when it starts listing decimal points. **The North Face Verto** is an ultra-light, wind and water-resistant jacket that weighs a mere 90.72 grams, making it perfect for those who like to travel fast and light, particularly in the mountains. It cleverly stuffs into its own chest pocket where it compresses to around the size of an energy bar, although you shouldn't try to eat it. The jacket is made from a super-light material called Pertex Quantum, a seven-denier fabric. It features an alpine-fit, hood and is perfect for when you get caught out in severe conditions. The jacket comes in red or black and retails for \$199.95.

The North Face (02) 8306 3311.

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Blinded by the Light

German company **LED Lenser** has a powerful new headtorch, the poetically named **H14 Headlamp**.

Featuring a solitary LED it manages to produce a mighty lumen output of 200 – enough to cause temporary blindness in your walking partner while you eat the last piece of chocolate for dessert. The 200 lumens produce a beam that throws up to 200 metres, while the beam itself is easily adjustable with one hand (without rings or dark shadows) using the Advanced Focus System. Modes include (and we are not making this up): morse tactical task, boost, power, low power, dim, blink, SOS, defence strobe and alien attack mode (alright, we may have made up the last one). The H14 Headlamp uses four AA batteries, has an operational time of 104 hours, weighs 348 grams and retails for \$129. zenimports.com.au



Simple is Not Always Stupid

The **Therm-a-Rest Ridgerest closed-cell mat** is a classic of the sleeping mat genre: comfortable, warm and, perhaps most importantly, reliable – unlike its more fickle cousin the inflatable mat, which is so alluringly comfortable but occasionally lets you down, literally. How can you make such a simple thing better? By adding the word Solar to the end. Introducing the **RidgeRest Solar** – the thickest, warmest, most comfortable closed-cell mat now has a heat reflecting surface that reflects heat back to your sleeping bag and body, apparently adding 13 per cent efficiency to the effectiveness of the heat trapping contours and bringing the R-Value up to 3.5. It retails for \$79.95. spelean.com.au



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Andrew Hughes

I grew up in northwest Tasmania. All my family and friends were into the outdoors in some way or another, so I was introduced to bushwalking early. By the time I left primary school I had done a few multiday walks; it was normal for us to spend the weekend in a tent.

During high school I didn't do a lot of bushwalking I surfed as much as I could, but it wasn't until uni that I did any serious walking again. I studied geology, so that interest in the natural world was always with me, and the best way to experience nature is to get out there and have a look yourself. Throughout uni I was constantly thinking about seeing more of Tassie. That culminated in a 25-day trip into South-west Tasmania. A mate had a big fall on the Eastern Arthurs, so we didn't manage to traverse the Western Arthurs as well, but we did manage the Eastern Arthurs, the Oberon Track back to Melaleuca, then the South West Cape Circuit before walking out.

Writing about that and a few other trips gave me the idea of trying to make a living from adventuring. I set off on a circumnavigation of Australia by bike, writing about it along the way. It was a great way to combine the creative aspects of writing and adventuring, trying to fund the trip as I went. But it was hard, and after almost a year of living on a shoestring I realised that it wasn't working as planned.

Back in Hobart I started a guiding business, again trying to combine my outdoors passion with making a living. It was run on a shoestring, and although I loved taking people out and being in the bush, I realised I didn't have a great head for business. I did manage to do one of my most memorable walks around that time, a seven-week north-south traverse of Tassie. My brother was planning to come with me, but he got appendicitis the day before I left, so I did most of it solo. That trip put a lot of things into perspective; being alone in some very remote country makes one feel pretty insignificant. Some might find that depressing, I found it empowering.

I did a teaching degree after that and it was there that I found my true calling I love teaching and being with kids, and I have managed to combine that with going on adventures. We have created a program where I share my adventures in the classroom via the internet; we call it 'adventure learning'. The first such expedition was sea kayaking from Hobart to Thursday Island on the northern tip of Queensland. Learning aspects vary with each trip, but cover nature and the environment, through to travel and survival skills. The last trip was back into the South-west looking for the Tasmanian tiger. We didn't find any, but we learnt loads about other native animals and habitat. This year we are giving the kids a choice of what they want to learn about (and what they want me to do). I am hoping they are going to leave me on a deserted island to fend for myself.

Nature has taught me a lot. One thing is how insignificant we all are. All we can do is try our best to achieve something and if it fails, in the grand scheme of things, it doesn't really matter, and if we succeed then all the better.

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Interview and photo Craig Ingram



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